

North East/
North West

**ACTION
PLAN
FOR
JOBS**

2015-2017





Action Plan for Jobs:

North East /North West

2015-2017

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Ministers' Foreword



Since the start of the Action Plan for Jobs process in 2012, employment has increased by over 135,000 across the economy as a whole and has exceeded the initial target set by the Government for 2016. While employment has increased in all of our regions, it has not been as fast in some regions. We need to improve the spread of economic recovery in the regions, through targeted supports for enterprise and job creation if we are to achieve the goal of sustainable full employment by 2018. Vibrant and competitive regions are important, not just from an economic perspective, but also from a societal point of view. Growing the economic base of regions supports social cohesion and provides opportunities for families to continue to live and work in their local communities.

The Government's 2015 Action Plan for Jobs places an emphasis on developing the jobs potential of the regions. It includes a commitment to develop and publish a suite of Regional Action Plans for Jobs to support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions. These plans will complement and contribute to the Local Economic and Community Plans to be developed by the local authorities and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to be developed by the three Regional Assemblies.

This Action Plan for Jobs for the North East/ North West, covering the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, and Louth, aims to build on the strengths of the Region, to support businesses to start up, grow and generate exports. Stakeholder engagement has been a core focus of the development of this plan, with many people, businesses, and public sector bodies in the Region actively contributing to identifying opportunity areas and actions for inclusion in the plan.

Like the national Action Plan for Jobs, the North East/ North West APJ sets out a series of commitments on the part of public bodies, complemented by some actions from the private sector, which will support enterprise growth and job creation. It is intended that this Plan will be a living, dynamic document, with additional actions and ideas added as they emerge over the lifetime of the Plan.

This Action Plan is the fruit of significant collaborative work between the businesses, people and public sector bodies within the region, which includes vibrant industry, education and tourism sectors, and I would like to thank them all for their input into this work. It is the collaborative efforts of all these stakeholders which will make a real and lasting impact on the jobs potential of the region.

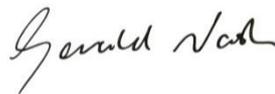
While my Department has facilitated the compilation of this Action Plan based on the engagements with stakeholders in the Region, ownership of the Plan – and ensuring delivery of actions - rests with the people, businesses, and public sector bodies in the North East/ North West.

To support regional enterprise development, the Government will provide up to €250 million over the next five years to support Regional Action Plan process. €150 million of this funding will be made available to IDA Ireland for a property programme by IDA Ireland. A further sum of up to €100 million will be made available through Enterprise Ireland over the next five years to support innovative and collaborative approaches to support job creation across the regions.



Richard Bruton, T.D.,

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation



Gerald Nash, T.D.

Minister for Business and Employment

KEY OBJECTIVES

**+28,000
JOBS**

Increase employment in the North East/ North West by 10 to 15% over the period to 2020, resulting in the creation of 28,000 more jobs compared to 2014

**+25%
START-UPS**

Increase the number of start-ups in the Region by a minimum of 25% by promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship through targeted programmes and initiatives

**+61 IDA
INVESTMENTS**

Increase the number of IDA investments in the region by 30-40%, to deliver 61 new investments to the North East/ North West by 2019



Develop a marketing proposition for the North East/ North West in the area of High Value Manufacturing

**AGRI-FOOD
+85%**

Increase the value of agri-food exports by 85% by 2025 by supporting food start-ups to grow and export through targeted programmes from Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Local Enterprise Offices and Údarás Na Gaeltachta



**OVERSEAS
VISITORS**

Capitalise on the Wild Atlantic Way experience in the North West to contribute to the targets in the Government's Tourism Policy Statement to grow overseas tourist numbers to 10 million by 2025 and increase overseas tourism revenue to €5 billion by 2025.



**TOURISM
EMPLOYMENT**

Build on the Ireland's Ancient East brand in the North East to contribute to the target in the Government's new Tourism Policy Statement to grow employment in the sector by 25% to 2025



Increase the flow of critical skills to the region's enterprises through the establishment of Regional Skills Fora in the North East and the North West to enable education and training providers and key enterprise stakeholders in the North East/ North West to work together in identifying and addressing the skills needs of the region

Executive Summary

The North East/ North West Action Plan for Jobs seeks to build on the successful APJ national plan which, each year, looks at how Government and industry can collaborate to improve the environment for enterprise to grow and jobs to be created. Since the Action Plan process commenced in 2012, over 135,000 jobs have been created across the economy as a whole.

To support economic development across all the regions of Ireland, the Government has committed to developing individual Action Plans for each of Ireland's regions. This Action Plan for Jobs North East/ North West region, covering the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth, will lay the foundations for building on the strengths of the region to develop its full potential for enterprise growth and job creation.

It is well recognised that the region faces many challenges, including its peripherality from Dublin, lack of a specific geographic identity and the impact of the economic downturn on the region, particularly in the construction sector. The North East/ North West suffered badly in the crash, with employment falling by 50,400 from 2007 to Q4 2012 and the unemployment rate at that time rising to 16.6%. The impact on the construction sector in the region was particularly significant, given that the sector accounted for 14% of employment in 2007. The numbers employed in this sector fell by over 20,000 between 2007 and 2011. The Manufacturing sector also suffered significant losses, with 8,000 jobs lost between 2007 and Q1 2012. However, this sector is recovering well, currently employing 27,200 in the Region (up from 24,200 in Q4 2012).

However, the strength of the Region's enterprise base has seen the Region deliver one of the strongest performances in the country in the growth of employment. Since the launch of the national Action Plan for Jobs, employment has grown by almost 12% in the Region with over 20,000 additional people at work. The Region has significant potential for further growth. Employment in the Region is growing and the unemployment rate has fallen from its peak of almost 17% to now stand at the national average of 9.3% (Q3 2015). The aim of this plan is to capitalise on this potential to drive a further 10-15% increase in employment in the region by 2020, resulting in the creation of 28,000 more jobs than at the end of 2014.

Key assets that can be harnessed to deliver on this ambition include the North East/ North West's diverse enterprise base and a flourishing SME sector with significant capacity to grow. Sectors identified in the plan for future growth and development include:

- Agri-food sector – capitalising on the depth of capabilities in established food companies in the North East/ North West, the region's natural resources and the opportunities presented by addressing changing consumer demands;
- Manufacturing - based on existing company capability within the Region and capitalising on new opportunities offered by research, development and innovation, scaling and developing international markets;
- Tourism - based on the Region's rich tourism, heritage and cultural offerings and the potential to develop new products in the sector, which offer significant potential to grow jobs in the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors;

- Internationally traded services – strengthened by enhanced broadband capacity through Project Kelvin;
- Cleantech – drawing on the potential offered by the Region’s natural resource base and the existing regional capabilities in engineering, manufacturing and R&D;
- Creative sector – including businesses which are based on creativity (design, digital media, fashion, crafts, visual arts).

Another key competitive advantage of the North East/ North West lies in its talent base. The three Institutes of Technology in the region, in Letterkenny, Sligo and Dundalk, have a combined student population of over 12,000, providing graduates across Business, Humanities, Engineering, Sciences and Creative Arts. These IoTs are working collaboratively with businesses in the region to meet the needs of enterprise, through initiatives such as Regional Skills Fora, led by the Department of Education and Science and industry open days to increase industry/ academic collaboration.

Ongoing investment in research and innovation is contributing to the region’s reputation as a knowledge economy. A strong communications/ access network is also emerging in the Region, with initiatives like Project Kelvin contributing to the development of a more competitive Region. The continuing Peace Process and the development opportunities arising as a result provide another important opportunity that can be capitalised upon.

The aim of this Plan is to deepen linkages across the public and private sector bodies in the region and support a cohesive effort to build on these strengths and drive the enterprise and jobs agenda within the North East/ North West. This increased collaboration will be facilitated through a number of recent reforms put in place by Government, including:

- the growing impact of the Local Enterprise Office network developed through the close co-operation between EI and the Local Authorities;
- the new mandate of the Education and Training Boards who, like the Higher Education Institutions, are now focused on developing a stronger link with their local enterprise base;
- the strengthening of the Regional Offices of IDA and EI with a new focus in their respective national strategies on regional job growth;
- the reform of Local Government, with a greater emphasis on the economic development role of the local authorities; and
- the emergence of a stronger policy framework to underpin sectoral opportunities with a strong profile at regional level

Stakeholder engagement has been a cornerstone of the development of this Plan, with many people, businesses, and public sector bodies in the North East/ North West contributing to the Plan to improve their region’s enterprise capability and hence jobs prospects. Strengthening the collaborative efforts of all these stakeholders will make a real and lasting impact on job creation within the region.

Strengths and Opportunities

The key strengths of the North East/ North West are:

- A diverse enterprise mix, with growing clusters in the North East in international business services, mainly Financial Services (Payments) and consumer goods and manufacturing. The North East also has vibrant clusters in the food and engineering sectors.
- In the North West, manufacturing of both discrete products such as Medical Devices, Pharmaceuticals and Automotive components is a long standing activity, strongly linked to the area's heritage in precision engineering. ICT services, including software development and deployment for Financial Services / Insurance, has also been a very strong growth sector for the North West.
- The strong entrepreneurial spirit across all counties in the Region that can prove attractive to companies, both multinational and indigenous, that are considering investing in the Region.
- Three Institutes of Technology in the Region, in Letterkenny, Sligo and Dundalk, are key resources in terms of skills development, research and industry-academic linkages. The campus incubation facilities within these Institutes also provide valuable supports to prospective entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- A strong food sector across the whole of the Region, which offers significant potential for further growth.
- Significant tourism and cultural assets, including the Wild Atlantic Way, the Shannon River and Lakelands in the North West and Ireland's Ancient East in the North East, which offer strong potential for employment growth across the entire Region.

The key objectives of this Action Plan build on these strengths and areas of opportunity.

Key Themes

Key actions and objectives to be delivered by a range of stakeholders in the region, through collaborative action in many cases, include:

- Increase the flow of new start ups;
- Expand incubation space and the throughput of new enterprise, moving on those who got a kick start in these facilities;
- Increase employment in the existing base of companies by strengthening their capacity to scale up their business and win new markets. The existing base of over 1,720 enterprises supported by the agencies, which now employ almost 35,500 people will be a particular focus of this effort;

- Develop the range and use of Incentives Schemes to support enterprises and retailers in the region;
- Build on the global sourcing and collaboration initiative and increase activity in this area to enhance the regional offering and increase collaboration with existing clients, and provide opportunities for Irish Companies to engage with IDA companies;
- IDA EI, and Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue to co-operate at a local level to support FDI and enterprise development, through actions such as networking events for indigenous and FDI client companies and the promotion of regional supply chains to potential FDI clients;
- Get more regional enterprises engaged in research and innovation through building on engagement between Institutes of Technologies in the region and industry;
- Further develop cross border and international partnerships to support the development of sustainable technologies (CREST);
- Examine ways to revive and reinvigorate retailing at County and Regional level.

Enterprise Agencies, Local Authorities and Educational Institutions will work collaboratively with leaders in the Enterprise Sector to deliver these ambitions.

KEY ACTIONS

• Win **61 new FDI investments** for the region by 2019

• IDA will build a **New Advanced Building Solution** in **Sligo** and a **New Advanced Building Solution** in **Dundalk** to enhance the competitiveness of the region in terms of availability of property solutions

• Údarás Na Gaeltachta will target an increase in new jobs of between 15% to 20% (**300 to 500 jobs**) **across the North West of the region**

• IDA will work collaboratively with Enterprise Agencies, ETBs and Institutes of Technology to develop a marketing proposition around the employment intensive **Global Business Services clusters**, such as the insurance and technical services cluster in the **North West** and the Financial Technology (Fintech - Payments) cluster in the **North East**

• Enterprise Ireland will target **manufacturing companies** in the North East/ North West to **scale, innovate** and **develop international markets**

• Maximise the impact of **cross border investment** in **research and innovation**, through the INTERREG VA Programme, including the delivery of research collaboration and innovation supports to over 1,400 SMEs

• Increase **collaboration between enterprise and the higher education institutes** in the region to maximise the impact of research on the enterprise base

• Target an increase in the number of participants on the **Food Academy Programme** and progress a number of companies in the region to the next level, Food Academy Advance.

• Develop regional/sub-regional **food innovation programmes** in conjunction with key stakeholders

• Develop new innovative professional **precision engineering toolmaking training programmes** in collaboration with employers, ETBs and Institutes of Technology

• Launch the **Shannon-Erne Waterway Blueway** as a recreational trail concept to include walking, heritage & food

• Develop the **North-South Electricity Interconnector** as a key piece of energy infrastructure which will enable job creation and economic development in the Border Region

• Explore the potential to establish **Crafts Hubs** for the Region to capitalise on design skills, help tourism, attract creative people into the region & improve quality of life.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This Action Plan for the North East/ North West, covers the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. This Region is unique in that provides an interface between two national economies, Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is also characterised by key trans-regional development linkages and opportunities, including the Letterkenny/Derry linked Gateway and Newry/Dundalk Twin City Initiative.

The objective of the Action Plan is to ensure that the region develops to its full potential through enhanced cooperation and collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders to support enterprise to start up, survive and thrive in the region.

In addition to strong clusters of activity in the North East and North West, the Region as a whole possesses a number of inherent advantages and emerging opportunities, in particular; renewable energy, agri-food industries, clean energy, tourism and services. Internationally traded services have also gained a foothold in the Region over recent years.

The strong food sector in the Region offers potential for further growth, with added value and increased productivity being key opportunities. Similarly, tourism offers significant potential for growth in all areas of the region.

The key objectives of this plan are:

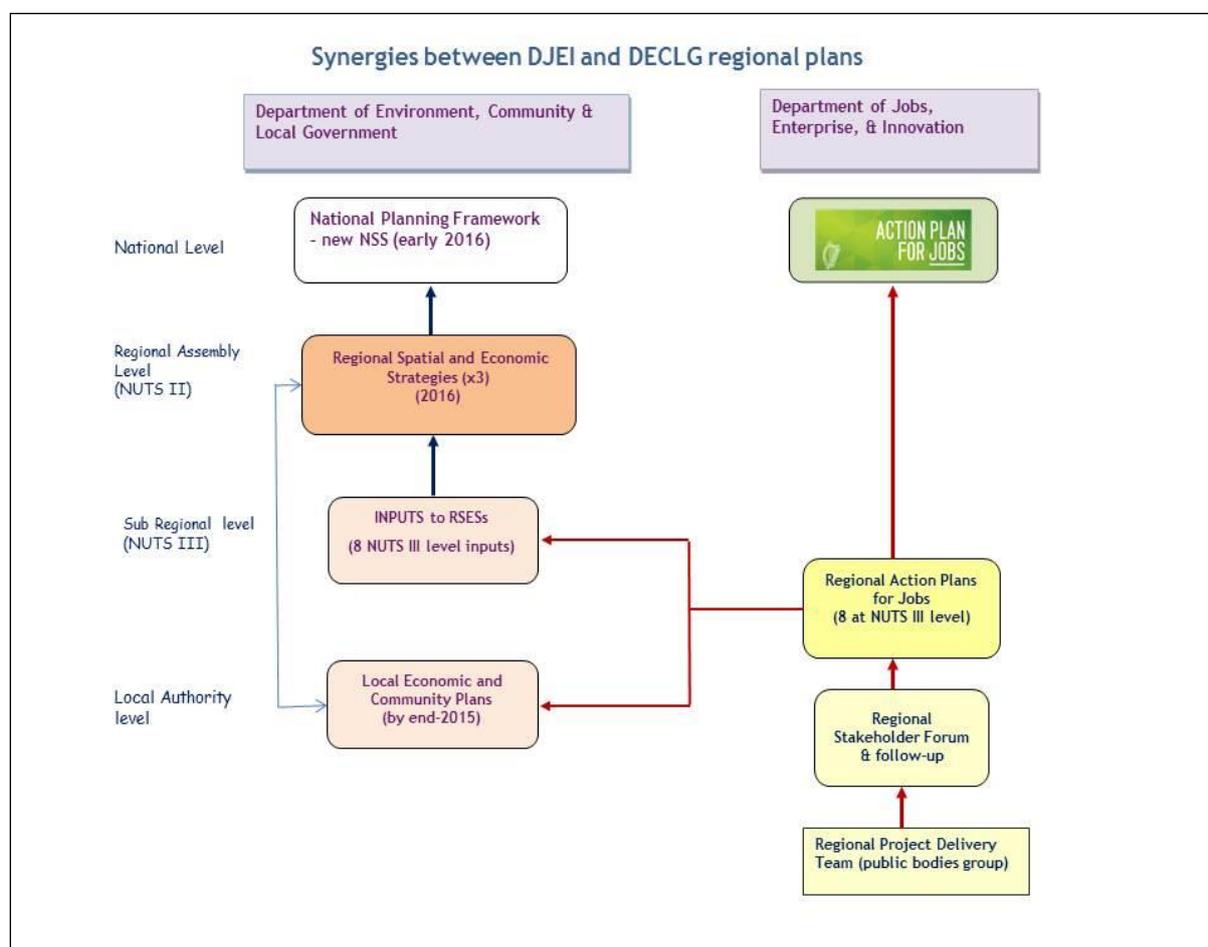
- Increasing employment in the Region by 10% to 15% over the period to 2020;
- Increasing the numbers of start ups in the Region;
- Supporting existing enterprise in the region to grow and scale;
- Get more companies in the region exporting;
- Attracting and embedding FDI;
- Targeting new inward investment opportunities by marketing the region as a location for FDI by Global Business Services and High Value Manufacturing;
- Building on Sectoral opportunities in Manufacturing, Engineering, Tourism, Agri-food, Marine and Energy, to sustain and grow employment across a broad range of sectors, locations and skills levels;
- Get more of the Region's enterprises engaged in research, development and innovation to support them in developing new products, services and processes for the global marketplace;
- Ensuring the North East/ North West has a strong supply of talent to support enterprises in the Region to grow and scale;
- Deepening linkages across the public sector bodies in the Region to support a cohesive effort to drive the enterprise and jobs agenda within the North East/ North West.

Progress in the implementation of each of these actions will be overseen by Enterprise Champions and a Regional Implementation Monitoring Committee (see Chapter 15), which will involve the key stakeholders in the region and which will meet twice each year.

The Plan covers the period 2015-2017, but through the monitoring process new actions can be added during that period, making the Plan a dynamic and living basis for progressing the jobs agenda in the North East/ North West.

Synergies with Local Government Reform

This Action Plan will complement and contribute to the Local Economic and Community Plans being developed by the four Local Authorities in the region, as well contributing to the regional Spatial Economic Strategies to be developed by the new Northern & Western Regional Assembly as shown on Fig. 1.



While the objective of this Action Plan is to focus on the potential for jobs growth and enterprise development within the North East/ North West, it is important that stakeholders work, not just within the Region but across to other regions in order to maximise the potential of enterprises in the North East/ North West.

Chapter 2: North East/ North West Overview

2.1 Population and main urban centres

The North East/ North West comprises of the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. The Region has a combined population of 514,893¹, making it the fourth largest in terms of population of the 8 administrative regions.

The major urban centres are Cavan (pop. 10,205), Drogheda (pop. 38,578), Dundalk (pop. 37,816), Letterkenny (pop. 19,588), Sligo (pop. 19,452), Monaghan (pop. 7,452) and Carrick on Shannon (pop. 3,980).

North East/ North West population by county

Donegal:	161,137
Sligo:	65,395
Leitrim:	31,798
Cavan:	73,183
Monaghan:	60,483
Louth:	122,897
Total:	514,893

A key concept of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002 was the development of potential and critical mass around a series of “gateways” and “hubs”. Gateways are centres with a strategic location, nationally and relative to their surrounding areas, providing national-scale social and economic infrastructure and support services. The NSS designated Sligo and Dundalk as Gateways with Letterkenny as a linked Gateway with Derry to deliver the level of critical mass needed to create more self-sustaining patterns of development.

2.2 Connectivity

Effective infrastructure is required as a pre-condition for economic success. However, there remains a lack of connectivity within the Region, and notwithstanding the infrastructure improvements in recent years (particularly in the East); infrastructure deficits must be addressed within the Region in order to maximise the opportunities for economic growth.

Efficient land transport links are vital to ensure connectivity in a national context, but also to facilitate cost effective access to those airports and sea ports which provide access to international markets. Progress has been achieved in terms of road access over recent years, and there is a clear understanding, north and south of the border, of the main transport corridors that need to be developed. Priority road projects include the M1/A1 Dublin – Newry – Belfast, N2/A5 Dublin - Monaghan - Derry, N14 Lifford – Letterkenny, N16/A4 Sligo – Dungannon and N17 Galway – Sligo, N4 Sligo – Dublin, N15 Sligo – Letterkenny/ Derry

Dublin airport, located within 20 minutes of County Louth, is also a highly significant air access point for some of the counties in this region. It is also of note that City of Derry Airport has benefitted from joint investment by the two Governments on the island.

¹ CSO Census of Population, 2011

The Government's recently published National Aviation Policy notes that the regional airports have an important role to play but Exchequer support to these airports must comply with the 2014 EU Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines. In this context Donegal airport, and Ireland West Airport Knock in the adjacent West Region, will continue to provide important transport linkages for business and tourism in the Region.

The Region also has access to two ports of significance - Drogheda in the North East and Foyle Port in the North West. Drogheda Port Company, a designated Port of Regional Significance under National Ports Policy, which principally handles bulk traffic plays an important role in regional freight distribution. As recommended in National Ports Policy control of the company will be vested in a local authority led governance structure and legislation to provide the legal basis for that vesting is currently before the Oireachtas.

The development of Project Kelvin is a significant boost to the region in terms of critical telecommunications infrastructure. Project Kelvin is an extensive submarine and terrestrial cable deployment that directly connects Northern Ireland to North America. This cable connects to 13 towns and cities, including Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Coleraine, Londonderry, Omagh, Portadown, Strabane, Letterkenny, Castleblayney, Dundalk, Drogheda and Monaghan. This Project Kelvin cable build has added much needed capacity to this region to further support both local and global companies. Local companies are attracted to the high capacity, extremely secure and reliable network. Businesses can now increase their communications and next-generation Internet service offerings as well as increase their access to a larger marketplace of available service providers. The new network is also attractive to global companies, such as leading financial houses, exchange markets, service providers and media companies. Notwithstanding this project, the Region continues to have poor broadband performance in relative European terms outside of the main urban centres and advancement in telecommunication infrastructure and performance, represents an important step in creating a more competitive regional and national economy.

2.3 Quality of life

"Quality of Life" is increasingly an important factor in attracting and retaining skilled people, particularly internationally mobile skilled labour, and in attracting mobile foreign direct investment. The North East/ North West has much to offer in this regard, with a high quality and attractive rural environment, improving accessibility and vastly improved cross-border political and community relations arising from the Good Friday Agreement. The key urban centres in the region play an important role in the delivery of key services and as focal points for a range of cultural, educational, sporting and recreational activities.

Recreation and Tourism

The North East/ North West is an area with many natural assets. The Region is the source of Ireland's two longest rivers, the Shannon and the Erne, which have been connected to form the 300km Shannon Erne waterway (Leitrim/Cavan/Fermanagh), one of the world's longest waterways. It also is home to the Marble Arch Caves Global Geo-Park (Cavan/Fermanagh), Ulster Canals (Fermanagh/Monaghan/ Armagh/ Tyrone) and the Cooley-Gullion-Mourne Mountain ranges.

The Region has an abundance of lakes offering a range of water-sport activities while forest walks and sculpture parks are increasing in number. The Region, including cross border, also possesses some attractive and well regarded golf courses, including Enniscrone Golf Club (Sligo), Ballyliffin Golf Club (Donegal), Slieve Russell (Cavan), County Louth Golf Club and Concra Wood Golf Club (Monaghan). Like most communities in Ireland, the North East/ North West possesses strong GAA links, with each town and village having access to join hurling or football teams.

Louth and Meath County Councils jointly promote the Boyne Valley World Heritage site, with Drogheda as the Gateway to access the many historical sites in the area, including the nearby attractions: Newgrange, the Battle of the Boyne site at Oldbridge, Beaulieu House, Mellifont Abbey, monastic settlement at Monasterboice and Slane Castle.

Fig 2 - Newgrange



Culture

The North East/ North West has a rich cultural heritage and was home to two of Ireland's most well known poets, W.B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh. The unique heritage and culture of the Gaeltacht is an additional cultural asset in the North West of the Region.

The region possesses a wide variety of cultural amenities and offers numerous channels and venues for cultural events and cultural exchange. While a small number of cultural events have increased in terms of national profile, such as the Sea Sessions & Surf Musical Festival in Bundoran, the Harvest Blue Festival in Monaghan, Earagail Arts Festival, the Táin Walking Festival in Louth, Drogheda Arts Festival and Drogheda Maritime Festival, there is also a vast array of smaller scale events that are community based and family friendly.

The region also boasts some excellent cultural venues, including the Regional Cultural Centre (Letterkenny), Sligo County Museum and the Model centre (Sligo), the Ramor Theatre (Cavan), the Market House, the Garage and Iontas Theatres (Monaghan), Droichead Arts Centre (Drogheda) and An Táin Arts Centre (Dundalk) and Glenview Museum (Leitrim). Highlanes Municipal Art Gallery

provides a dedicated visual art space for the Irish north east region, of an international standard in terms of design, management, environmental control and security

Education

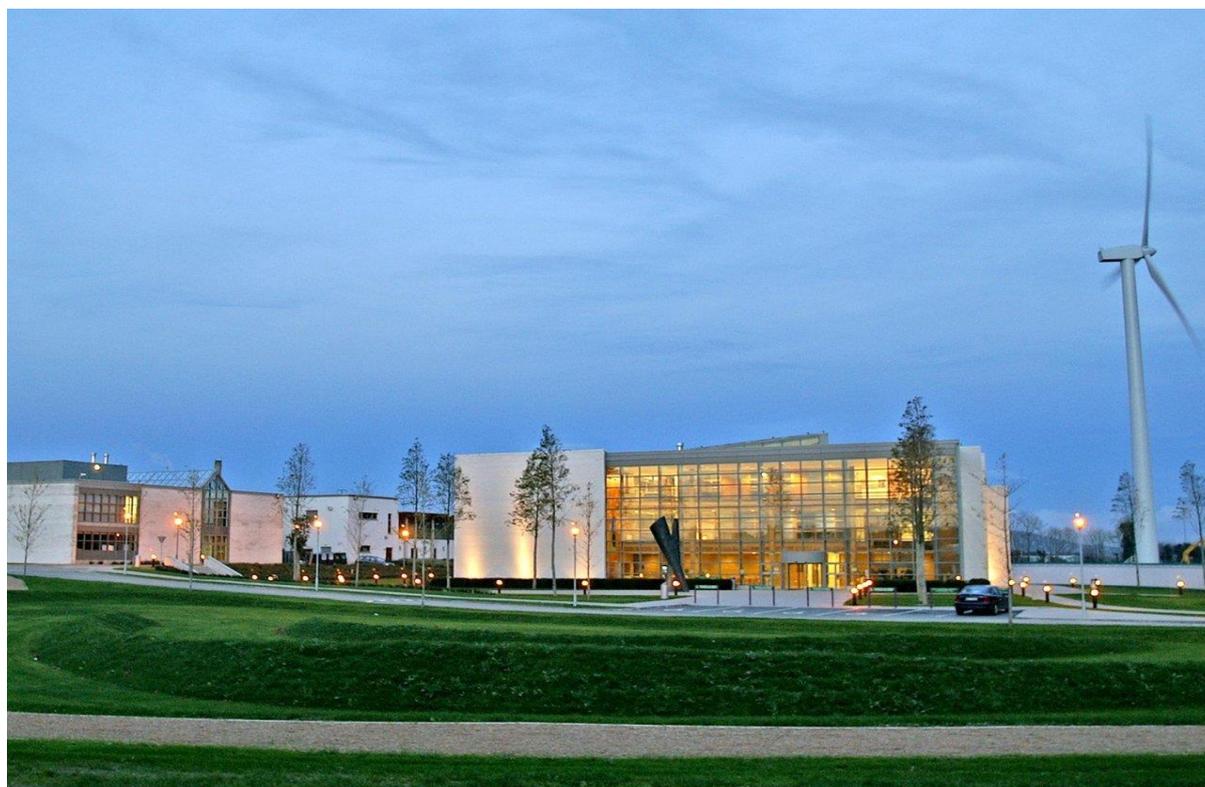
Access to good educational facilities is an important factor for young families, in particular, those who are in a position to choose where they wish to live and work.

The Region offers excellent education opportunities for learners of all ages, from pre-school to third level and lifelong learning opportunities.

The Four Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the region manage and operate a number of second level schools and a network of Further Education colleges and Training centres which provide a large range of education and training opportunities for young people and adults to develop workforce skills.

Access to third level education opportunities is provided in the region by Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo, St. Angela's College (NUIG) Sligo and Dundalk Institute of Technology. Other nearby 3rd Level facilities adjacent to the region include the Dublin Universities and Institutes of Technology, Galway University and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Third Level facilities in Northern Ireland which are accessible to students in the Region, including Queens University Belfast, NW Regional College Derry, University of Ulster and NI Colleges of Further Education, for example, Enniskillen.

Fig 3 – Dundalk Institute of Technology



Other factors

There are now two emerging corridors in the Region with the eastern (M1) corridor anchored on the three key settlements of Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry. The emerging western corridor, anchored on the Derry/Letterkenny linked Gateway and extending south towards Sligo and beyond towards the Galway Gateway.

The M1 economic corridor midway between Dublin and Belfast is home to a growing hub of multinational and indigenous companies centred round Dundalk and Drogheda and experiences the benefits of being located within easy reach of the greater Dublin area. It also benefits from strong road and rail links and its proximity to Dublin international airport and Belfast Airport and ease of access to higher education institutions such as Dundalk Institute of Technology and the universities in Dublin and Belfast.

The Region provides an interface between two national economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The continuing Peace Process and the development opportunities arising as a result now need to be capitalised upon. Key trans-regional development linkages and opportunities include the Letterkenny/Derry linked Gateway and Newry/Dundalk Twin City Initiative, the Dublin/Belfast corridor, Sligo/Enniskillen corridor, Cavan/Enniskillen, Lifford/Strabane and Monaghan/Armagh linkages.

Stretching from Lough Swilly to Carlingford Lough, the three gateways within the Region, Sligo, Dundalk and Letterkenny, serve as regional service centres for three distinct hinterlands/sub-regions. Counties Cavan and Monaghan are served by Dundalk, which hosts the Institute of Technology, rail link to Dublin and ports servicing the three easterly counties. Sligo, with its, regional hospital, Institute of Technology, rail-link and port serves as the commercial and administrative centre for the sub-region of counties Leitrim, Sligo and South Donegal. Letterkenny is the gateway for the north-west sub-region, with its regional hospital services and Institute of Technology.

The North East/ North West has benefited considerably from the investment of EU funds in the Region over a number of years. The North East/ North West has, in particular, benefited from the Interreg IIIA programme. The range of projects that have received funding under this programme include tourism and waterways projects, childcare facilities and projects in the food sector.

Over the past forty years local authorities on both sides of the border have recognised the benefits of cross-border co-operation, to develop new products and markets. Cross-border bodies such as the East Border Region Ltd, ICBAN and North-West Partnership Board Ltd have developed links with local industries and attracted funding for training, innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives under successive EU Interreg funding programmes.

Chapter 3: Economic Performance

3.1 Employment and unemployment

Overview

As was the case with all regions, employment in the North East/ North West was substantially impacted by the economic recession which commenced in 2008.

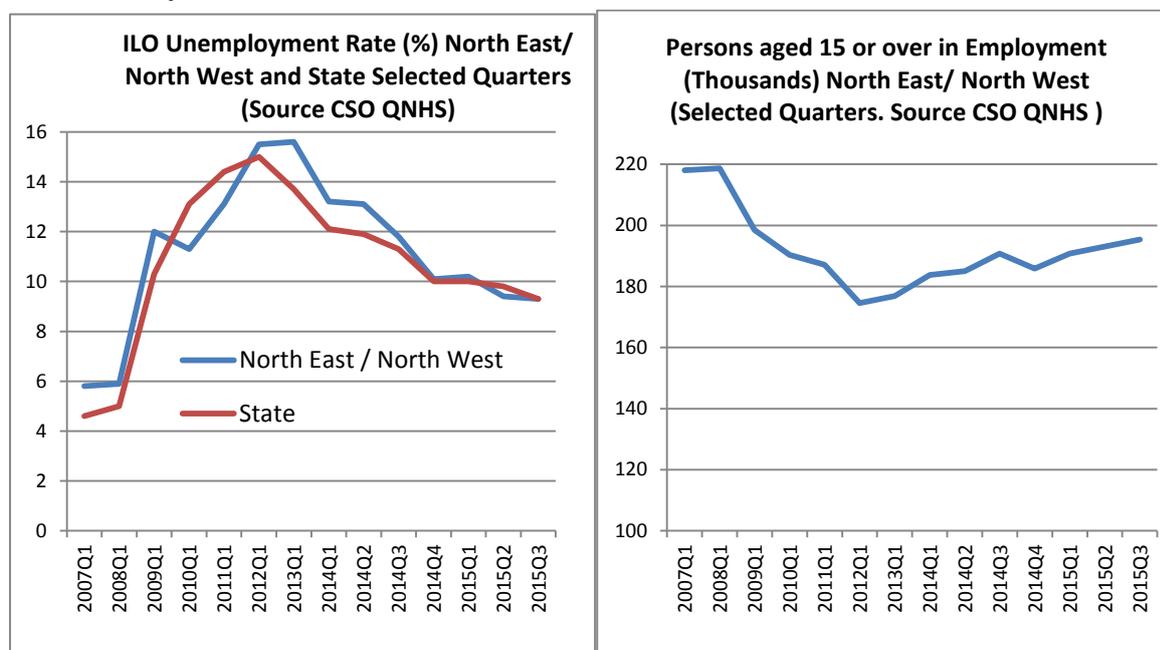
In 2007, when employment in Ireland was at its highest historically, the North East/ North West had 221,900 people in employment (Q3 2007), with an unemployment rate of 6%. This was the highest unemployment rate of all regions and well above the national figure of 4.7% at the time.

In the period up to Q4 2012, employment in the Region fell by 50,400 and the unemployment rate for the region rose to 16.6%. As the national economy recovers, the employment situation in the Region has begun to improve, with an increase of almost 21,000 in the numbers at work since the beginning of 2012. In Q3, 2015, employment in the region stood at 195,400 and the unemployment rate had dropped to 9.3% (see trend at Fig. 3 below). This compares with a national average unadjusted unemployment rate of 9.3% and only the Dublin and Mid East Regions (8.0% and 8.1% respectively) have lower unemployment rates.

North East/ North Westregion – Key labour market data, Q3 2015

Nos. in employment:	195,400
Unemployed:	19,900
In Labour Force:	215,200

Figure 3. ILO Unemployment Rate (%) North East/ North West and State and Numbers employed in North East/ North West



Sectoral employment trends

The Services sectors accounts for over two-thirds of employment in the North East/ North West. As with all other sectors of the economy, there was a significant decrease in employment in the Services sectors during the recession with employment falling from a peak of 140,000 in 2007 to 119,000 in 2012; however since then, the numbers employed have started to recover somewhat and at Q1 2015 employment in this sector stood at 130,700.

There was a significant dependence on the construction sector for employment in the Region in the period prior to the recession. The sector accounted for 31,300, or 14% of total employment in the region during 2007, compared to the State as a whole where construction accounted for 12.8% of total employment. The economic downturn and its impact on construction therefore had a significant impact on employment in the region. The numbers employed in construction in the region fell by over 20,000 to a low of 12,100 in the period between 2007 and 2011 however they have remained relatively constant during the past few years and currently the sector employs 12,600 accounting for 6.6% of employment in the Region, compared to 6.3% of employment nationally.

While construction sector employment has shown signs of improvement throughout the country and would be expected to grow in line with economic recovery, the sector is unlikely to reach the levels of employment attained in 2007, either nationally or regionally. For this reason, greater diversification of jobs across other sectors is important for the region to improve its employment situation.

Employment in the Industry/Manufacturing Sector decreased by 8,000 over the period 2007 to Quarter 4 2012, from a high of 32,200 to 24,200. However, the numbers employed in this sector have started to increase again since 2013 and currently stand at 27,200. Manufacturing in the region still retains a proportionately larger share of employment (14.2%) compared to the national figure of 12.7%.

Agriculture accounts for 10.4% of employment in the Region. This is significantly higher than the national average of 5.5 % of all employment, highlighting the importance of this sector to the region. The numbers employed in the Agriculture Forestry and Fishing sector in the Region fell during the recession to as low as 12,200 in Q1 2010, but have recovered and now exceed 2007 levels.

Table 1 – North East/ North West Employment by sector, 2007-2015 (selected Quarters)

Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Thousand) North East/ North West , by Economic Sector and Quarter									
	2007 Q1	2011 Q1	2012 Q1	2013 Q1	2014 Q1	2014 Q2	2014 Q3	2014 Q4	2015 Q1
All NACE economic sectors	218	187.1	174.5	176.8	183.8	185	190.7	185.8	190.7
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	16.4	14.1	14	18.2	17.7	17.2	19.4	17.7	19.9
Industry (B to E)	30.6	29.9	24.8	24.5	25.6	26.2	25.7	27.1	27.2
Construction (F)	33.3	12.1	11.8	11.5	11.3	11	11.9	9.8	12.6
Services (G to U)	137.3	130.1	123.4	122.6	129.1	130.7	133.3	131	130.7

Employment in the Services Sector

Table 2 below provides a detailed breakdown of the Services sectors by NACE REV .2 classification comparing the position in each of those sectors at Q1 2007 and Q1 2015.

Table 2 – Employment in Services sector

North East/ North West Services Sector Employment (Thousands) NACE Rev 2			
	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
Services (G to U)	137.3	123.4	130.7
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	32.8	25.2	27.1
Transportation and storage (H)	8.1	8.5	7.6
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	14.9	11.8	13.7
Information and communication (J)	4	3.6	..
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	6.1	4.5	6.6
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	7.3	6	6.9
Administrative and support service activities (N)	5.5	6	4.6
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	10.2	10.6	10.1
Education (P)	14	14.1	15.9
Human health and social work activities (Q)	23.9	23.6	25.6
Other NACE activities (R to U)	10.3	9.6	10.3

Within the broad Services sector, the combined areas of Public Administration/Defence, Human health/Social work and the Education sector account for 51,600 of those employed in the North East/ North West- or 39% of total Services employment. Employment in the Human Health/Social Work area is particularly strong, with 25,600 working in that sector.

Given that a significant proportion of those employed in Human Health/Social Work and the Education sectors are likely to be public servants, there is a very high level of public sector employment in the Region. Apart from the six County Councils, there are a number of decentralised Government Departments located in the Region, for example Sligo, Carrick on Shannon, Dundalk, Letterkenny and Buncrana, Cavan, Monaghan and Dundalk.

Outside the public sector, the Wholesale and Retail sector remains the most significant sector of employment, with 27,100 persons employed, representing 14.2% of total employment in the Region. In keeping with what has occurred throughout the country during the recession, employment in this sector has fallen from 2007 but has shown some signs of improvement.

While there are variations between subsectors, overall employment in the Services Sector is showing signs of recovery towards the 2007 peak employment levels.

Employment in Industry/Manufacturing

Employment in the Industry/Manufacturing Sector currently stands at 27,200. Enterprise Agency employment statistics, which serve as a useful indicator of underlying trends, show that total employment in Enterprise agency supported companies in the Manufacturing sector in the North East/ North West stood at 23,557 in 2014 which represents almost 87% of all industrial employment in the region.

The Food Sector accounts for employment of circa 8,500 or over a third of all employment in the Manufacturing Sector and employment in this sector has grown since 2010.

Some other sectors have shown modest growth over the past three years, including Chemicals and Chemical Products, Basic and Fabricated Metal Products and Computer, Electronic, Optical Products and Electrical Equipment.

Table 3 Manufacturing Employment North East/ North West

CSO Industrial Employment and Enterprise Agency Manufacturing Employment (Selected Periods)			
North East/ North West	2007 Q1	2012 Q1	2015 Q1
CSO Industrial Employment	30,600	24,800	27,200
Manufacturing Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies	End 2006	End 2011	End 2014
All Agency Manufacturing Employment	27,797	22,545	23,557
Food, Drink and Tobacco	8,767	8,007	8,512
Basic and Fabricated Metal Products	2,318	1,826	2,107
Chemicals and Chemical Products	1,453	1,559	1,742
Machinery and Equipment	1,673	1,371	1,688
Rubber and Plastic Products	2,130	1,692	1,617
Electrical Equipment	1,404	1,216	1,291
Computer, Electronic and Optical Products	1,220	1,118	1,279
Non-metallic Mineral Products	1,907	1,299	1,123
Medical and Dental Instruments / Supplies	1,702	1,345	1,064
All other manufacturing	5,223	3,112	3,134
Source: CSO QNHS Data and DJEI 2014 Annual Employment Survey			

Employment in companies supported by State agencies

At end 2014, there were 32,367 people employed in Enterprise Agency supported companies operating in the North East/ North West, with almost 3,000 jobs created in the last 4 years alone.

Table 4 - Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies

Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies (Selected Years)							
North East/ North West				Change between 2006 and 2011		Change between 2011 and 2014	
	2006	2011	2014	(,000)	(%)	(,000)	(%)
All Sectors	35,329	29,490	32,367	-5,839	-16.5	2,877	9.8
Manufacturing	27,797	22,545	23,557	-5,252	-18.9	1,012	4.5
International Services	4,252	4,046	5,460	-206	-4.8	1,414	34.9
Financial Services	117	76	303	-41	-35.0	227	298.7
Other Sectors	3,163	2,823	3,047	-340	-10.7	224	7.9
Source: DJEI Annual Employment Survey 2014							

The Manufacturing sector, employing over 23,500 people, accounts for most of the enterprise agency-supported employment in the North East/ North West. More than 2,000 people are employed in Basic and Fabricated Metal Products Sector and approximately 1,750 in the manufacture of Chemicals and Chemical Products.

There are over 5,400 people employed in International Services in the region. Over the past decade, the numbers employed by enterprise-agency clients in this sector have increased by 38%.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland, the State agency responsible for the development of indigenous Irish companies, supported 599 client companies in the North East/ North West at end 2014, employing 20,505 people (17,891 Permanent). Major client companies of Enterprise Ireland include E&I Engineering (Donegal), Aurivo Co-op Society Ltd (Sligo), Hilton Foods Ltd (Louth), Carton Bros. Ltd (Cavan), Combi Lift (Monaghan) and Vistamed Ltd (Leitrim).

Employment in Enterprise Ireland supported companies has grown from 18,798 in 2010 to 20,505 in 2014, an increase of 9%, with significant growth in the Manufacturing sector particularly the Food sector.

IDA Ireland

There are 77 IDA Ireland supported companies based in the North East/ North West employing 9,734 staff. The main FDI clusters that exist within the Region are in the Life Sciences, Engineering and Financial Services Sectors. The key activities are:

- Life Sciences Manufacturing – specifically medical devices and biopharmaceuticals
- Manufacturing of engineering and automotive products
- Technology development and support for the global Insurance and payments industry.

A sample of IDA's clients in the region include Pramerica Systems, United Health, Abbott (MedTech), Bruss (Engineering), Mirror Controls, CG Power (Engineering) AvantCard (Financial Services), Sita (Software), Global indemnity (Insurance), Ebay, Paypal, Coca Cola, GSK, Allergan (Pharmaceuticals), Abbvie (Medtech) and Zeus (Medtech).

Employment in IDA supported companies increased from 8,048 to 9,734 in the period between 2010 and 2014, representing an increase of 21%, with significant employment growth in the International Services Sector. The main growth sector across the FDI base in the region has been within the Financial Services Sector specifically in insurance and payments technology or 'FinTech'.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

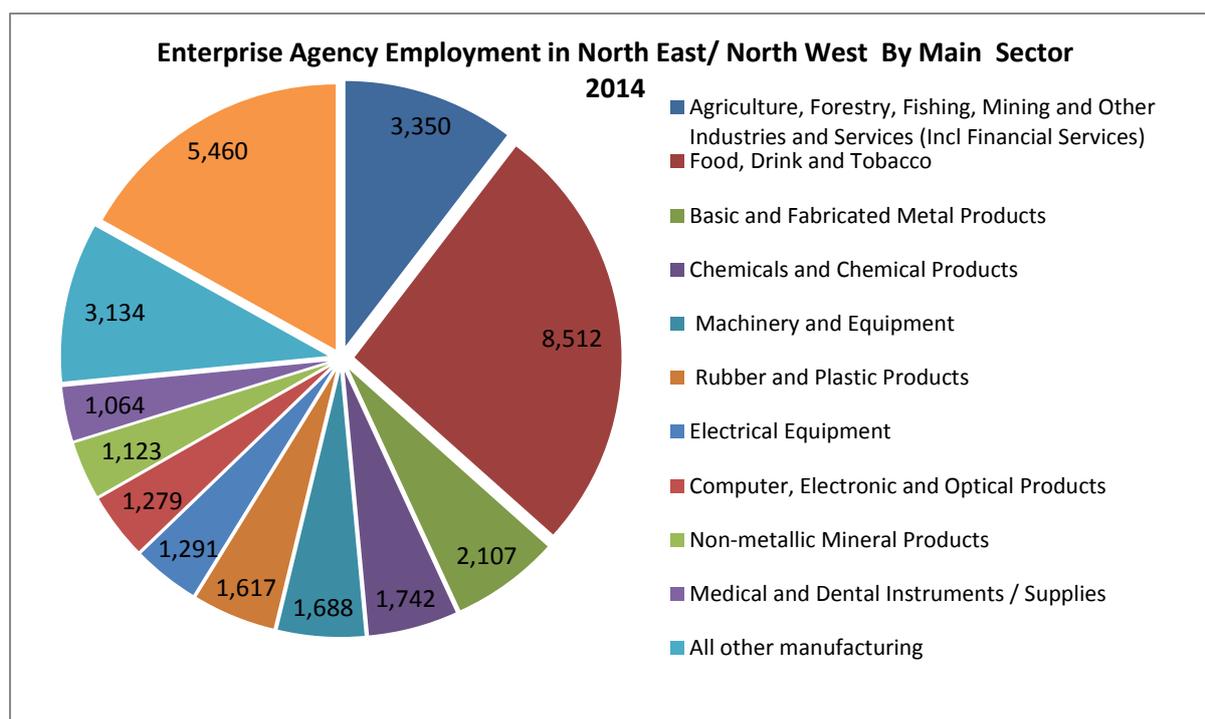
Údarás na Gaeltachta is the State agency responsible for supporting job creation in indigenous and foreign owned enterprises in the Gaeltacht. Údarás supports 295 companies, employing over 2,100 employees at end 2014 with the Manufacturing sector accounting for half of this employment. These jobs span a wide range of skillsets from operatives to highly innovative R&D personnel. Client companies of Údarás who are scaling include Radox Teo (Diagnostics), R.A.P Teo (Food Packaging), Faisc Miotáil Éireann Teoranta (Engineering) and Galard Teo (Gluten Free Breads) in the region.

Employment in Údarás na Gaeltachta supported companies has decreased slightly in the period 2010 to 2014 (from 2,225 to 2,128), however employment has grown in each of the last two years.

Local Enterprise Offices

The six Local Enterprise Offices in the region (one in each county) supported 1,049 client companies in 2014, with a total employment of 5,323 people. The numbers employed in LEO supported enterprises increased by 470 in 2014.

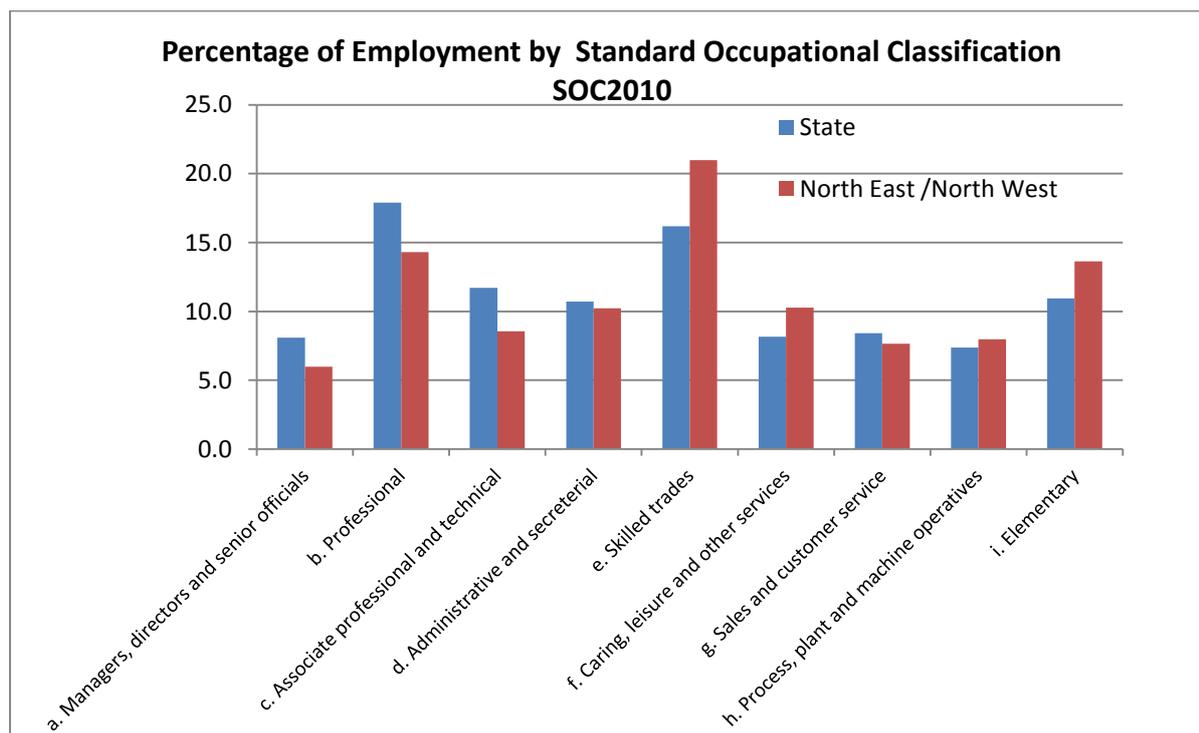
Figure 4 - Sectoral Breakdown of Employment in Enterprise Agency Supported Companies



Employment by occupation

Figure 2 below shows the percentage breakdown of employment by occupation (Standard Occupational Classification 2010) across the region as at Quarter 1 2015 in comparison to the State as a whole. It is notable that the numbers in the North East/ North West in the A, B and C classifications of managerial, professional and technical occupations, at 28.8%, are significantly below the average for the State (37.7%) in these classifications. The North East/ North West has the highest proportion of its workforce (21%) engaged in the Skilled Trades category.

Figure 5 – Employment by Standard Occupational Classification



3.2 Business demographics in the region

The previous section has outlined the labour market position of those who live in the North East/ North West, including those who work outside the Region.

A closer examination of the number of enterprises active in the region indicates that there were 18,332 active enterprises operating in the region in 2012, the most recent period for which data is available from the Central Statistics Office on Business Demographics. This figure excludes Agriculture and Public Service and reflects a reduction of 5,563 in the number of enterprises active in 2007.

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the number of active enterprises for selected sectors in the Business Economy in the years 2007 and 2012. Clearly, the time period for the data precedes the recent upturn in the economy which has seen growth over the past few years. Nonetheless, the figures indicate that Wholesale/Retail and Construction Sectors continue to be the most important sectors in terms of number of active enterprises in the Region.

Table 5 – No. of enterprises for key sectors, North East/ North West , 2007 & 2012

Number of Active Enterprises (Number) 2007 and 2012 in North East/ North West (Selected Sectors)			
	2007	2012	% Change
Business economy excluding activities of holding companies (B to N,-642)	23,895	18,332	-23.3
Manufacturing (C)	1,732	1,456	-15.9
Construction (F)	8,003	3,933	-50.9
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	5,460	4,931	-9.7
Transportation and storage (H)	1,555	1,248	-19.7
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	2,220	2,113	-4.8
Information and communication (J)	442	466	5.4
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	1,914	1,845	-3.6
Administrative and support service activities (N)	1,125	914	-18.8
Education (P)	546	814	49.1
ICT total (261 to 264,268,465,582,61,62,631,951)	300+	432	not available

There was a 51% decrease in the number of enterprises operating in Construction in the region over period. The Manufacturing and Wholesale/Retail Sectors also suffered losses, in line with developments at national level during the recession. However, the number of enterprises operating in the ICT Sectors has shown significant increases over the period albeit from a relatively low base.

Scale of companies

Of the enterprises active in 2012, approximately:

- 16,500 (90% of total number) employed less than 10 people
- 1000 employed between 10 and 20 people
- 500 employed between 20 and 49 staff
- 200 employed between 50 and 249 employees.
- a relatively small number of large companies in the region employed more than 250 employees.

These statistics show that the enterprise base in the North East/ North West is dominated by indigenous companies, with a relatively small number of FDI companies in the Region with more than 250 employees.

3.3 Education and skills attainment

Table 6 below shows the highest level of education completed by the population in the North East/ North West, based on the 2011 Census of Population. The average for the State is provided for comparative purposes.

While there will, of course, be deviations from the national average in all regions, the most significant variation for the Region is in relation to those with Third Level or higher education. 23.4% of those living in the North East/ North West have Third Level education or higher, compared to the national average of 29.1%.

Table 6 - Highest Level of Education completed: North East/ North West and national average, 2011

Level of Education	North East/ North West	State
Primary or no Formal	20.3	15.2
Lower secondary	18.8	16.6
Upper secondary	32.8	34.4
3rd Level +	23.4	29.1
Not stated	4.6	4.7
Persons (,000)	336.8	3,003.5

Source: Derived from CSO Census of Population 2011

3.4 Gross Value Added (GVA)

Gross value added (GVA) is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

In 2012, the latest year for which such data is available, the North East/ North West accounted for 6.2% (estimated value €10 billion) of the total Gross Value Added produced within the State. The Services sector contributed €6.8 billion to regional GVA in 2012, with Industry and Agriculture contributing €2.8bn and €337 million respectively.

GVA per capita levels in the North East/ North West, at €19,016, were the 2nd lowest of all regions in 2012 (with only the Midlands lower) compared to €34,308 per capita nationally.

North East/ North West region – GVA 2012 Data GVA Basic Prices

The Region accounts for 6.2% of GVA State Total

GVA per Capita 2012 €19,016 compared to €34,308 State

Composition of GVA:

Agriculture 3.4% Industry 28.4% Services 68.2%

In 2007, when the total value of GVA in the State was at its peak at €174 billion approx. the GVA of the North East/ North West was valued at €13 billion (7.5%) approx. of the national total, however by 2012 the value of goods and services produced in the region had fallen by almost 25% to € 9.8 billion – only the Mid East region suffered a larger decrease (26.8%) in the period.

Chapter 4: Enterprise Assets

4.1 Enterprise Agencies in the North East/ North West

Enterprise Ireland



Enterprise Ireland works with companies in the North East/ North West to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets. In this way, it supports sustainable economic growth and regional development, and secures employment. As an open economy, export success is fundamental to Ireland's regional and national growth. Enterprise Ireland has a presence in the Region with offices located in Dundalk in the North East and Letterkenny and Sligo in the North West.

The development of companies in the North East/ North West is important because locally owned businesses are more likely than others to:

- Generate a self-sustaining cycle of growth and reinvestment. Companies' profits are more likely to remain in Ireland and seek new investment and business opportunities within existing businesses or new startups;
- Form part of a balanced portfolio of economic activities that provide insurance against technology, sector or market-specific shocks;
- Provide and sustain a base of sub-supply and services companies to service the multinational company base; and
- Generally operate a wide range of business functions in the North East/ North West and Ireland and provide opportunities for employee advancement and for the development of world-class companies.

Employment Levels in EI Client Companies in the North East/ North West

Enterprise Ireland supported 599 companies in the North East/ North West, employing 20,505 people² in 2014. This represents 11.4% of EI-supported employment nationally.

Enterprise Ireland's Role

Enterprise Ireland works with SMEs and large companies and is legally responsible for the functions of the Local Enterprise Offices in the North East/ North West. This ensures that targeted supports are available to companies, regardless of their size, but based on their needs.

Enterprise Ireland provides strategic support (aimed at developing capability within companies) and financial supports (for co-funded development projects). Very often both are combined to maximise the impact of the supports provided. Over the two year period, 2013 to 2014, Enterprise Ireland approved €55.5 million directly to client companies in the North East/ North West.

² DJEI SPD Annual Employment Survey 2014

Such supports are aimed at all aspects of a company's business plan and are designed to work together and mutually reinforce each other. Supports range from management development programmes, export development programmes, lean/productivity improvement, various financial supports (including grants to undertake feasibility, R&D) the provision of equity to startups, access to 31 Overseas Offices around the world, access to mentors and access to third level research.

Enterprise Ireland's agenda covers a number of key areas:

Entrepreneurship & New Companies: Developing the pipe-line of entrepreneurs and startup companies with the potential to trade internationally in the future

Non-Exporting Established Companies: Working with domestically focussed companies with the potential to export via the Potential Exporters Division (PED) regionally-based seminars, workshops, on-line diagnostic tools and market research resources are all provided to companies seeking new opportunities and preparing to enter new markets.

Established (Exporting) Companies: Enterprise Ireland engages with established companies in developing their capability to consolidate and deepen their footprint in existing export markets. Supports range from LEAN, R&D, management development, funding and access to 31 Overseas Offices – all as part of a comprehensive growth strategy.

Innovation: Enterprise Ireland offers a range of supports to drive innovation activities within all companies at different stages of development.



IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland's remit is to attract foreign direct investment to Ireland and importantly, thereafter to work with their existing base of client companies to encourage them to sustain, grow and expand their business presence in Ireland. In doing so, IDA client companies generate valuable employment throughout the country.

IDA Ireland's new five-year corporate strategy places a renewed emphasis on FDI in the regions, setting ambitious FDI targets for each region. IDA is targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% in each region outside Dublin over the period 2015-2019 compared to the agency's 2010-2014 strategy. For the North East/ North West, this equates to a minimum of 61 additional projects in the region by 2019.

In order to deliver on these ambitious targets IDA Ireland will:

- Work with public bodies and the private sector on Regional Action Plans
- Work closely with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence in each region through continued company transformation
- Increase Global Business Services and High Tech Manufacturing investments
- Align IDA business sectors with the regions and their corresponding strengths to develop sectoral ecosystems

- Work more closely with Enterprise Ireland and its indigenous base of companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region
- Pursue new areas of opportunity for clients companies
- Develop appropriate property solutions through the provision of buildings and sites in designated regional locations
- Increase IDA Ireland's regional footprint to adequately support the regional strategy.

At a local level, IDA and Enterprise Ireland co-operate to support FDI and indigenous enterprise development, through actions such as networking events for indigenous and FDI client companies and the promotion of regional supply chains to potential FDI clients.

IDA Property

IDA Ireland is committed to ensuring a good supply of suitable property solutions is available for FDI in regional locations, and where the private sector is not delivering a solution, IDA will take a lead role in the delivery of new facilities.

IDA has built and developed a number of industrial parks in the North East/ North West which offer strategic facilities for companies which may be interested in locating in the Region. These include:

Letterkenny Business & Technology Park , a c.42 hectare (c.104 acre) park, 1.5 km (1 mile) north east of Letterkenny town centre, 59 km from Donegal Airport, and 133 km from Belfast International Airport. The Park has been designed to accommodate a range of clients in both international services and manufacturing sectors. Existing advanced technology facilities have been designed to a high specification and greenfield site options are available for future development.

Finisklin Business & Technology Park, Sligo, a fully landscaped c.45 hectare (c.112 acres) Business Park, 1 km from Sligo town centre, 55 km from Ireland West Airport Knock and 216 km from Dublin Airport. There is direct access to the N4 (Dublin), N15 (Donegal) and N16/A6 (Enniskillen/Belfast) National Primary Routes. The park has been completed with all the necessary telecommunications, utilities infrastructure and buildings / site options to cater for the needs of Multi-National Clients. IDA Ireland has a 31 hectare site strategically located on N4 South West of Sligo town to be developed as new business and technology park for the region.

Carrick-on-Shannon Business Park, a c.12-Hectare (c.30 acre) park located 67 km from Ireland West Airport Knock and 154 km from Dublin. It is strategically located on the N4 Sligo-Dublin route and has the necessary telecommunications, utilities infrastructure and buildings/site options to cater for the needs of multinational clients.

Dundalk Business & Technology Park, a 58 hectare (145 acre) park located on the main M1 Dublin to Belfast route and within easy access of Dublin Airport and major ports. The services infrastructure has been designed to suit utility intensive biopharma manufacturing and international services clients.

Finnabair Business & Technology Park, a 37 hectare (90 acre) park located on the main M1 Dublin to Belfast route. The services infrastructure has been designed to suit manufacturing and international

services clients. There are designs currently in place for advanced offices and advanced technology buildings as well as greenfield areas available for future development.

Drogheda Business & Technology Park, a 26 hectare (64 acre) park located adjacent to the M1 motorway linking Dublin and Belfast. There are ample greenfield areas available for future development. The park has been designed to include advanced office facilities and advanced technology buildings of high standard to suit both manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors.

Monaghan Business & Technology Park, a 12 hectare (29 acre) park located on the N12 National Primary Route east of Monaghan Town, 125km from Dublin Airport. The park has been landscaped to a high standard and has a full services infrastructure in place. The Park has property designs available to suit both manufacturing, and international services clients. There are also greenfield sites available for future development.

Cavan Business & Technology Park, a 15-hectare (37 acre) park with direct access to the N3, National Primary Route and M3 motorway that connects the town to Dublin... The Business Park is landscaped to a high standard and has a services infrastructure to suit the needs of both manufacturing and international services sectors. The Park has property designs and greenfield sites available to suit all sectors.

Údarás na Gaeltachta



Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main community language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. The authority endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities.

Údarás na Gaeltachta works with SMEs & large companies to grow their businesses in the Gaeltacht. An tÚdarás encourages investment in the Gaeltacht through a range of financial and non-financial incentives for new and existing enterprises in the Gaeltacht. Údarás client companies are both indigenous and foreign owned: the organisation also actively supports micro-enterprises which are supported by LEO's in non-Gaeltacht areas.

In the North East/ North West, the Donegal Gaeltacht is located primarily in the west of the county along the coast and is Ireland's second largest Gaeltacht area. It has a population of 24,744 (Census 2011) representing 15% of the population of Donegal and 24.5 % of the total Gaeltacht population. In 2014, there were 1,942 people employed fulltime in Údarás supported companies in the Donegal region. The main sectors in this Gaeltacht region are (i) Manufacturing, (ii) Food, (iii) Tourism (iv) Fish processing and aquaculture (v) Life Sciences.

The organisation supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Údarás also operates a property portfolio to provide sector specific property solutions to new and existing clients across the Gaeltacht for all

stages of business development, from commercialisation (post incubation) to scaling for long-term growth.

Local Enterprise Offices



Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), which operate within the local authority structure, act as a “First Stop Shop” for anyone seeking information and support on beginning a new business or growing an existing business. Their role is to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation. They support business start-ups and work to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses. Support is provided in the form of information, advice, training, mentoring, management development and selective financial support.

Local Enterprise Offices located in counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth play a key role in supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development within the North East/ North West. They provide a range of services including:

- Business Information and Advisory Services;
- Enterprise Support and Development Services;
- Entrepreneurship Support Services;
- Local Economic Development Services.

Enterprise Ireland has a central role in maximising the impact of LEOs in the region through key interaction areas, to include ensuring proactive progression pathways for client enterprises between the supports of the LEOs and those offered by EI.

The wider economic development role of local authorities has been significantly enhanced under the Government’s *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (October 2013) and the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Key strategic objectives of the local authority economic development role will be to implement actions to capitalise fully on the economic potential of local strengths and assets, and also to collaborate with relevant agencies to maximise the economic impact of major growth centres, in accordance with regional economic priorities which, in future, will be agreed in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

In 2014 the Local Enterprise Offices had 1,049 clients with a combined total of 5,323 jobs in LEO supported companies. Employment in LEO supported companies increased by 470 in 2014. For 2015 and subsequent years, each LEO will publish an annual Local Enterprise Development Plan, setting out clear targets for job creation and enterprise support.

InterTradeIreland



InterTradeIreland is a Cross-Border trade and business development body funded by the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and the Northern Ireland Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which has been given responsibility to boost North/South economic co-operation to the mutual benefit of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

InterTradeIreland supports businesses throughout the island of Ireland to take advantage of cross-border opportunities (worth in excess of €2.8bn annually) to improve capability and drive competitiveness, growth and jobs. Since its establishment, over 25,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland to identify and develop all-island trade and innovation opportunities; 6,000 have participated directly on programmes, with over €980m worth of trade and business development value and over 3,000 jobs created.

InterTradeIreland helps small businesses through a strong mix of funding support, business intelligence and meaningful contacts. It supports companies not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and vital introductions to help find the right person with the right skills. InterTradeIreland also helps early stage companies become more 'investor ready' with a range of Equity and Venture Capital Advisory Services and links to key Business Angel networks on the island. For more established businesses looking to grow, InterTradeIreland's Funding for Growth Advisory Services and expertise can help guide them to the most appropriate form of finance for their business stage.

InterTradeIreland also provides access to a strong knowledge base through graduates, Universities, company collaboration and specialist advisors to support innovation and product development. Its extensive networks and partnerships, formal and informal, are central to its purpose to grow business in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A series of business events, including conferences, seminars, workshops and masterclasses on various topics and themes (most of which are free to attend) offer companies the opportunity to make important connections across the island.

InterTradeIreland supports SMEs to prepare for public procurement opportunities through workshops, Meet the Buyer events and tender alerts. The body also helps SMEs to gain access to cross-Border sales through programmes such as Acumen and Elevate, and to identify sources of finance. The annual Seedcorn Competition, run by InterTradeIreland, is aimed at early and new start companies that have a new equity funding requirement and has a total cash prize fund of €280,000. The competition is run on a regional basis across four regions – Munster, Connaught & Leinster, Dublin and Northern Ireland.

4.2 Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Three new Regional Assemblies came into being on 1st January 2015, namely the Northern & Western, the Midland & Eastern and the Southern Regional Assemblies. The Northern & Western Assembly covers counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan.

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly comprises of 25 elected Members nominated by the 8 local authorities within the region. The main roles of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly are to:

- Manage the BMW Regional Operational Programmes;
- Monitor the general impact of all EU and Irish Exchequer-funded programmes in the Northern and Western region;
- Promote the co-ordination of the provision of Public Services in the region; and

- Ensure that national policies take regional issues into account.

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly is responsible for regional economic and spatial planning, along with existing responsibilities for the preparation and management of the European Union Operational Programmes, promotion of regional policy and inter-regional programme administration.

The new regional programme for the 2014-2020 period has an investment of €320 million, which includes €160 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and has been formally approved by the European Commission. This new investment programme will continue support for enterprise start-ups and expansion through the recently formed Local Enterprise Offices and will also co-fund Enterprise Ireland schemes in support of 16,000 SMEs across the region.

Other initiatives in the programme include energy efficiency schemes in social housing along with the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme for low income households, support for research and innovation initiatives in third level institutions and the extension of high-speed broadband to all unserved settlements in the region, as part of the National Broadband Plan, with an estimated 144,000 households set to benefit. These investments will provide a further stimulus to the region in the years ahead and will enhance the region's capacity to benefit from economic recovery and employment generation.

The ERDF co-financed Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme supports integrated actions for sustainable urban development through strategies to tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges affecting urban areas. The Scheme will enable investments in Irish urban centres to the order of €80 million for the period 2014-2020. It will involve European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding of approximately €40 million and matching funding from the local authorities.

4.3 Local Authorities

There are six Local Authorities in the North East/ North West – Donegal Co. Council, Sligo Co. Council, Leitrim Co. Council, Cavan Co. Council, Monaghan Co. Council and Louth Co. Council. The Councils provide an extensive range of services for the residents of all counties in the Region, covering areas such as the environment, community development, housing, planning, tourism, physical infrastructure and economic development. The Councils play an active role in the development of industry, business, social, arts, heritage and cultural affairs.

Supports provided to assist in the creation of new enterprises include, but are not limited to:

- Selective financial support.
- Information, advice and training e.g. Business Bootcamp Donegal
- Online business directory (Cavan)
- Active engagement with Connect Ireland to promote job opportunities in the region
- Development of high-spec office parks for leasing in main towns – C-Tek, M-Tek & Clones Technology Park (Monaghan)
- Rates incentive scheme to encourage/assist businesses to occupy vacant shops (Louth)

The economic development role of local authorities has been significantly enhanced under the Local Government reform programme as set out in the Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government (October 2013) and given statutory effect by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. Key strategic objectives of the local authority economic development role will be to implement actions to capitalise fully on the economic potential of local strengths and assets and to collaborate with relevant agencies to maximise the economic impact of major growth centres, in accordance with regional economic priorities which, in future, will be agreed in the context of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

In accordance with 'Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government' – each local authority has established a Strategic Policy Committee for Enterprise and Economic Development. The Committee comprises Elected Members of the local authority, together with sectoral representatives, including representatives from the development/ construction sector and business/commercial sector. The purpose of the Committee is to link together Elected Members and representatives working with social, economic and cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies, particularly where they relate to local authority activities.

Local Community Development Committees

The aim of the LCDCs is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

The membership of LCDCs includes members of the local authority, local authority staff, representatives of public bodies which provide services in the area; representatives of local community interests; local community representatives; and representatives of publicly funded or supported local development bodies. The majority of members must be from the non-statutory sector.

The main function of an LCDC is to prepare, implement and monitor the community elements of the six-year local economic and community plan.

4.4 Community Enterprise Centres

Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) provide a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and support the development of local entrepreneurship in urban and rural locations. Since the Community Enterprise Centres scheme was established in 1989, €61.4 million has been approved and over 100 CECs have been set up across the country.

There are 29 Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) located in the North East/ North West which collectively represent a total State investment in the range of €14 million approved by Enterprise Ireland). Table 7 below presents information on each of the CECs in the North East/ North West in 2013. Many of the Community Enterprise Centres offer 'hot desk' facilities with associated supporting infrastructure including broadband and access to meeting rooms. The Local Authorities also have serviced sites available in their portfolio.

Table 7 – Community Enterprise Centres in the North East/ North West

Community Enterprise Centre	Square Footage of CEC	Occupied Rate
Louth		
Drogheda Enterprise Centre Ltd (The Mill)	7,000	100%
Drogheda Development Centre Ltd (Millmount)	2,020	80%
Louth Craftmark Ltd (Creative Spark)	10,000	68%
Ardee Community Development Co Ltd	29,600	100%
Dundalk Enterprise Development Co Ltd (DEDCO)	10,000	90%
Cavan		
Cavan Innovation and Technology Centre Ltd	11,624	100%
Cavan County Enterprise Fund	20,456	Phase 1: 100% Phase 2: 80%
Kingscourt Community Enterprise Centre Ltd	15,494	100%
Baillieborough Development Association	14,000	Phase 1: 100% Phase 2: 100%
Cootehill	35,508	Phase 1: 100% Phase 2: 0%
Blacklion		50%
Killeshandra	6,997	-
Monaghan		
Lough Egish Community Development Ltd	5,380	100%
Castleblaney Community Enterprise Ltd	25,000	100%
Castleblaney Food Centre	22,500	70%
Emyvale Development Association Ltd	8,092	80%
Sligo		
Sligo County Enterprise Fund	2,357	65%
Leitrim		
Mohill Community Development Association Ltd	8,310	35%
Drumshanbo Enterprise Centre Co Ltd	25,500	65%
Leitrim County Enterprise Fund (The Hive)	16,300	76%
Drumshanbo Community Council Co Ltd – The Food	32,000	81%
Ballinamore and Ballyconnell Canal Communities Development Co Ltd.	7,640	15%
Donegal		
Convoy Enterprise Centre Ltd	100,000	62%
Ballybofey and Stranorlar Integrated Community	14,950	20%
Erne Enterprise Development	21,000	55%
Donegal County Enterprise Fund	36,000	85%
North East Inishowen Tourist and Development Company Limited	10,760	65%
Donegal Town Community Chamber Ltd	7,962	75%
Milford and District Resource Limited	2,000	35%
Source : Enterprise Ireland Analysis - Occupancy rates can vary at any given time given the nature of the business		
3 CECs have been approved for funding and are currently under construction		

4.5 Higher and Further Education & Training

Dundalk Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology are the three main providers of third level education located in in the North East/ North West.

Other nearby 3rd Level facilities outside the region include the Dublin Universities and Institutes of Technology, Galway University and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. According to HEA statistics, there were approximately 10,150 full time students from the Region attending HEA Funded Institutions in 2013/14. Of these approximately 7,000 were enrolled in Universities and 2,360 in various Institutes of Technology.

There are also 3rd Level facilities in Northern Ireland which are accessible to students in the region which include Queens University Belfast, NW Regional College Derry, University of Ulster and NI Colleges of Further Education e.g., Enniskillen.

Within Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB (MSLETB), Sligo Training Centre is the largest provider of Specific Skills training, Traineeship and Apprenticeship Training within the Sligo Leitrim Area offering a wide range of programmes to people seeking employment or progression to employment. Also within MSLETB, Sligo College of Further Education is the largest provider of Further Education in the Northwest, offering a diverse range of courses for Post Leaving Certificate and mature students. Donegal ETB, Drogheda Institute of Further Education, O Fiaich Institute (Dundalk), Cavan Institute and Monaghan Institute also provide further education programmes on a full time and part time basis for students across the Region.

Dundalk Institute of Technology

The Dundalk Institute of Technology caters for approximately 4,500 students and 1,500 graduates per annum and offers under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes. The Institute has four main faculties which are Business and Humanities; Informatics and Creative Arts; Engineering and Health and Science.

The Regional Development Centre is Dundalk Institute's Innovation Support and Technology Transfer organisation. The Centre is the commercially oriented interface between DKIT and the industrial, commercial and business life of the region, and makes available the expertise, facilities and resources of the Institute for the wider benefit of the regional economy. The centre is supported by and works in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.

The Institute's research and innovation agenda, within both established and emerging areas is driven by various research teams which are embedded across the Institute's four academic schools – Engineering, Informatics & Creative Arts, Health & Science, and Business & Humanities. DKIT has always recognised the need to have a diversity of research centres and groups, including academic, industry facing and mission orientated centres. All of their established research centres are where the Institute possess the critical mass of world class researchers:

- with established international track records in their own right
- whose research outputs are internationally benchmarked
- whose work is interdisciplinary in nature cutting across traditional academic schools
- who possess state of the art infrastructure and facilities.

DKIT-DCU Strategic Alliance

North-South political progress, the development of the all-island economy and the emergence of the Dublin - Belfast Corridor and the North East region as Ireland's dominant economic driver provides the impetus for a significant partnership between Dublin City University and Dundalk Institute of Technology. This partnership consolidates education and research foundations for this economic corridor, delivered through national and global engagement, using the key drivers of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and enterprise and innovation to all of the citizens that they serve.

The resulting synergies in the strategic co-development of higher education needs along the Eastern Corridor and North East Region aligns strongly with the National Strategy for Regional Clusters, as articulated in the HEA Landscape Document. In keeping with national policies, inclusion of Northern Ireland is a key part in producing a coherent and cost effective education and research strategy for the Eastern Corridor into the future. Ultimately this alliance enables both institutions to widen the access opportunities for the population of the Eastern Corridor and ensure that they play a co-ordinated role in the economic development of the North East. Combined, the two institutions continue to support enterprise and innovation in the economy in a manner that both operating independently could not achieve.

Institute of Technology Sligo

The Institute of Technology, Sligo (IT Sligo) has circa 4,000 students enrolled and circa 1,800 graduates per annum across the Schools of Business & Social Sciences, Science and Engineering & Design. The Institute offers under-graduate and post-graduate degree programmes.

IT Sligo encourages a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and has an important role in driving economic and social development in the Region. The Institute's strategic priorities all link to Research and Innovation in support of teaching and learning, infrastructural development and regional development. Their research and innovation is based around strategic research groups; integration of research and innovation with teaching; support for businesses and community and international collaboration with research centres and businesses.

IT Sligo also has a number of Strategic Research Centres: the Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials Centre (PEM); the Centre for Research in the Social Professions (CRiSP), the Centre for Environmental Research Innovation and Sustainability (CERIS) and the centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies.

The Innovation Centre located in IT Sligo is a hub for regional development in the North East/North West. The Centre exists to help and support entrepreneurs, nurture new start-ups and fledgling enterprises and assist established businesses develop and expand. The Centre currently houses over 25 new businesses employing over 70 people. Business sectors include software development, chemical and environmental analysis, biotechnology, health food development and e-learning and web design.

IT Sligo is the training college for National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT). NIBRT provides a range of online distance learning programmes in Biopharmaceutical Processing and Bioanalytics in partnership with the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Industrial collaborations have included Merck Sharp Dohme, Pfizer and Eli Lilly.

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) has c.3,700 enrolled and c.1,000 graduates per annum across the Schools of Business Studies, Engineering, Science and Tourism. LYIT has campuses at Letterkenny and Killybegs.

Strategic Research Centres include the Technology Gateway Centre, Wireless Sensor Applied Research Laboratory (WiSAR). The Letterkenny Campus houses The CoLab - an incubation, research and enterprise centre which supports entrepreneurial development. This centre has recently been extended in association with the Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP). It is now branded as CoLab at the North West Regional Science Park.

The Institute is also working with Donegal County Council and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on an emerging Marine Resource Innovation Centre (MRIC).

LYIT is involved in the cross border North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) initiative. The NWRSP, in association with LYIT's partners NISP (Northern Ireland Science Park) and NWRCBG (North West Region Cross Border Group), allows the world renowned Science Park brand, operating model, and support programmes be brought to the North West at Fort George in Derry and at the CoLab at LYIT.

St. Angela's College Sligo

St. Angela's College, Sligo, a College of the National University of Ireland, Galway, is a provider of University-level education and research in the North West of Ireland. Although established as a College of Education for Home Economics Teachers it delivers programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels across the academic departments of Nursing and Health Studies, Home Economics and Education. The Government's decision to name St. Angela's College, Sligo as the sole provider of Home Economics Teacher Education in Ireland (2003) and the Department of Health's approval of the new School of Nursing and Health Studies has resulted in a dramatic increase in student numbers in the past five years. Current student numbers attending the College are over 1,000.

In 2014 St Angela's College worked with IDA North West and IDA Medical Technologies to develop and deliver a tailored course for the structural heart segment of medical technologies. It is hoped that this training infrastructure and capability can be jointly leveraged to target companies and activities in the sector.

SOLAS

SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland is responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating the delivery of integrated Further Education and Training by the Education and Training Boards. SOLAS also manages the National Skills Database which pools all available information on the supply and demand for skills in Ireland. It carries out research on behalf of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and publishes a number of reports annually on the supply and demand for skills including Regional Labour Market Bulletins which are available on the Skillsireland.ie website.

Education and Training Boards

There are four Education and Training Boards (ETBs) responsible for the provision of post primary and further education and training in the North East/ North West:

- Donegal ETB
- Cavan and Monaghan ETB
- Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB
- Louth and Meath ETB

The ETBs operate a significant network of Further Education Colleges and dedicated Training Centres offering full and part time, blended and distance learning opportunities to people living and working in the region. Collectively the ETBs will assist over 50,000 school leavers, jobseekers and employees to engage in education and training in 2015.

ETB provision, including specific skills courses, post leaving certificate programmes, traineeships and apprenticeships are targeted at developing industry specific workforce skills as well as more generic employability skills such as communications, teamworking, ICT literacy and numeracy. Courses and programmes are available for a broad range of employment sectors including manufacturing, business and financial services, retail, hospitality, healthcare, early childhood education, engineering and construction. Programmes with accreditation are available at all levels up to level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

There are strong partnerships with local employers in identifying and responding to skills needs. A number of new initiatives are underway across the region including in the development of new traineeships for the hospitality and engineering sectors. The ETBs in the region are also participating in the process to develop a number of new apprenticeship programmes in an expanded range of sectors.

In collaboration with employers in the Retail, Manufacturing, Food & Beverage, Farming, Fisheries, Hospitality and SME sectors, the four ETBs are also delivering over 80 programmes through the Skills for Work Programme. This initiative provides an opportunity for employees in the region to participate in accredited upskilling targeted to their needs.

Skillnets

Skillnets actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to help them address their current and future skills needs through an enterprise-led approach. Skillnets funds groups of companies with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses and their employees, as well as free training to job-seekers. Skillnets has 63 training networks nationwide. Through its ManagementWorks programme, which offers structured learning and one to one mentoring support, Skillnets works with SMEs to build their management and financial capability.

Skillnets training networks based in the North East/North West include:

- Rural Enterprise Skillnet
- Learning Waves Skillnet
- National Organic Training Skillnet
- Ibec Retail Skillnet
- Tech North West Skillnet
- Animal Health Ireland Skillnet

Other national sectoral Skillnets that deliver training to companies in the North East/North West include:

- Farm Business Skillnet (Irish Farmers Association)
- Macra na Feirme Young Farmers Skillnet
- ISME Skillnet (Irish Small and Medium Enterprise)
- XLVets Skillnet
- CPA Ireland Skillnet (Certified Public Accountants)
- Taste 4 Success Skillnet
- Law Society Skillnet

Over 1,200 companies in the North East/North West were members of a Skillnets training network in the past year and over 3,500 employees benefited from training. The main sectors supported by Skillnets in the North East/North West are Agriculture, Services, Retail, Food & Drink, Construction and Manufacturing.

Local Authority schemes

The Local Authorities administer a number of work experience and training programmes to support unemployed people to re-enter the workforce. Gateway is a local authority labour activation scheme that provides short-term work and training opportunities for long-term unemployed people who have been on the Live Register for over 2 years. The work opportunities are to benefit the local area. Gateway is managed by city and county councils (collectively known as local authorities) for the Department of Social Protection, which has overall responsibility for the scheme

The Built Heritage Scheme also provides employment opportunities to construction workers and skilled craftspeople.

Social Employment Schemes

Údarás na Gaeltachta manages and administers social employment schemes: Community Employment, Tús, Rural Social Scheme and Job Initiative. In 2014, 327 participants and 14 supervisors were involved in 14 schemes throughout the Donegal Gaeltacht. These schemes have an important dual role in providing work experience and training for the unemployed in the Gaeltacht community and having very significant input to community development projects.

Department of Social Protection (Employment Services)

October 2012 saw the launch of Intreo, a new service managed by the Department of Social Protection. Intreo Centres act as a single point of contact for all employment services and supports for both Jobseekers and Employers, providing support regarding benefits entitlements, advice on training options and assistance in securing employment/employees. In addition to these Intreo Centres the Department provides services to jobseekers and employers through its extensive Branch/Local Office Network, Local Employment Services Offices, Employment Services Offices, Jobsclubs and through its newly appointed Jobpath providers. Údarás na Gaeltachta also manages and administers social employment schemes for the Department of Social Protection,

The following Services are provided to jobseekers:

- Employment services and income supports.
- Expert assistance and advice on employment, training and personal development opportunities.
- Self-service facilities to provide jobseekers with information and guidance on employment and training opportunities.
- Access to information on job vacancies through "www.jobsireland.ie".
- Information on the full range of income supports provided by the Department of Social Protection, for example, jobseeker's payments, back to work and back to education payments, one-parent family payments, pensions and others.

In the case of an employer the Department provides a wide range of supports and including:

- Employment support and advice on a National and European level, giving an employer access to skilled, job ready candidates. For example the Jobs Ireland employment service is an excellent support resource when a company is recruiting – both now and in the future.
- JobBridge internships and work placement services.
- Financial supports when creating new jobs,
- Workplace supports to assist employees with disabilities.
- Advice and access to any employment initiatives of relevance to an individual company.

See http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/jobseekers_home.aspx for more information in relation to these services and service locations.

4.5 Research and Technology Centres

Research centres in the Region include:

- the **WiSAR Lab**, an Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateway based in the Letterkenny Institute of Technology. The focus of the Lab is on Wireless Sensor Networks;
- **Wind Energy Centre**, based in the Letterkenny Institute of Technology, which operates closely with leaders in the Wind Energy Sector;
- The **Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials Centre (PEM)** located in IT Sligo is a multidisciplinary research group focused on addressing specific manufacturing industry research needs in Product Design and Rapid Prototyping, Manufacturing Process Stimulation and Optimisation, Enhancement, Optimisation & Control of Polymer Processes, Precision Engineering and Micro-Machining, Laser-based prototyping and Manufacturing technologies and Nano-Materials and Nano-Technologies Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials Centre (PEM);
- **Centre for Research in the Social Professions (CRISP)**, a leading multidisciplinary research centre in IT Sligo in the North-West, researching social policies and practices impacting on people's daily lives in partnership with social professionals and local communities. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for people living within the region. Social science research at IT Sligo has achieved national and international recognition;
- **CREST, the Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies**, in IT Sligo, is a €3.5m EU funded cross-border project aimed at helping small green energy businesses to commercialise initial concepts into profitable products;
- **Centre for Affective Software for Ambient Living Awareness (CASALA)**, based in DkIT, is aimed at working with Irish industry to achieve product innovation, business competitiveness, and market leadership in the emerging ambient assisted living (AAL) sector.
- **Creative Media Research Group (CMRG)**: Creative Media research at DkIT is characterized by a mix of pure and applied research. The current research programme of this group focuses on Creative Media Content Creation; Creative Pedagogies & Transformative Work Practices; Creative Technologies; Future Communications; Media – Culture, Community and Society; Media Production and New-Media Narrative Forms.

Further detail on these centres is provided in Appendix A

4.6 Enterprise Networks

Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce provide support to enterprises and work to create an improved business environment for both new and existing businesses. They also provide employee training and upskilling, space and, importantly, information for businesses on the supports and services that are available to them. At a regional level, they work to provide networking opportunities and business information events and work with key influencers and decision-makers on behalf of their members on issues that are impacting on their businesses.

There are seven Chambers of Commerce in the North East/ North West:

- Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
- Sligo Chamber of Commerce
- Carrick-on-Shannon Chamber of Commerce
- Cavan Chamber of Commerce
- Cootehill Chamber of Commerce
- Drogheda Chamber of Commerce
- Dundalk Chamber of Commerce

4.7 Local Development Companies

Integrated Local Development Companies are not-for-profit companies that target the areas of greatest need in the country, to provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment. A core role is to promote social inclusion; support enterprise development and employment creation; facilitate access to education, training and lifelong learning and assist community groups in identifying needs and developing local solutions.

There are eight Integrated Local Development Companies in the North East/ North West:

- Breffni Integrated Development Ltd
- Donegal Local Development Company
- Inishowen Development Partnership
- Leitrim Integrated Development Company Ltd
- Louth LEADER Partnership
- Monaghan Integrated Development Company
- Sligo Leader Partnership Company
- Comhar na nOileán Teo.

The focus of the Local Development Companies falls into two broad categories – Rural Development and Social Inclusion. They provide a range of services to clients, including services to support the development of enterprise throughout the region. Programmes provided include the Rural Development Programme, Business Development Training Programmes and Coach and Mentoring services.

The Local Development Companies work closely with the LEOs and have successfully progressed some clients to LEO supports. The Companies also provide supports to clients under the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme and the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), which are funded by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government respectively. SICAP includes an Economic Development strand, which supports initiatives aimed at promoting employment and self-employment, including developing and/or sustaining Social Enterprise.

Rural Development – LEADER Programme

Local Development Companies operate the LEADER programme throughout the region (with the exception of Galway City) providing grant assistance to micro-enterprises for both start up and existing enterprises. Grant aid is provided for research, feasibility studies, business planning, capital equipment & buildings, marketing and training. Inter-territorial and cross border and transnational networking focused on innovation and shared learning is an integral part of the programme.

Tús initiative

The Tús initiative is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people. The work opportunities are to benefit the community and are provided by community and voluntary organisations in both urban and rural areas. The Tús initiative is managed by local development companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta for the Department of Social Protection, which has overall responsibility for the scheme.

4.8 Other bodies supporting enterprise in the North East/ North West

Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established under statute in 1998 to foster and promote growth in the Western Region of Ireland. The WDC's remit covers seven counties in the broad Western region (just under 20% of the total population). In addition to counties Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim which are covered in this Action Plan, the WDC also has a remit in respect of Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, and Clare. The WDC works to identify and implement economic development and to ensure that socioeconomic policy and practice meet the development needs of the Region. Through providing capacity and analysis it works in a collaborative way with public, private and voluntary partners to achieve common development outcomes.

The WDC's activities include funding and realising key indigenous sectoral growth (e.g. Creative economy, Renewable energy etc), conducting research on regional and rural issues, promoting the regional globally through its www.lookwest.ie platform, and managing and administering the WDC Investment Fund (WIF). This dedicated fund provides risk capital and fills a funding gap identified by businesses and community groups in the Western region. The WDC was allocated €1million in 2016 and €1million in 2017 under the Government's Capital Plan 2016-2021, to establish a Strategic Regional Development Office in the Western Region to co-ordinate the implementation of the recommendations of CEDRA in the Western Region.

WestBIC

WestBIC is the Quality Accredited EU Business & Innovation Centre (BIC) and a specialist provider in the portfolio of supports to innovative start-ups and early-stage SMEs. WestBIC generally serves the Northern and Western Region based on its available resources and in line with regional structures. It is an active Member of the European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN), comprising c.250 regionally and locally based BIC organisations involved in the identification, selection and

provision of specialist support for new and existing enterprises. BICs typically operate as versatile private/public partnerships, combining both Government funding and private cash or in-kind contributions. It is part funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation through Enterprise Ireland.

Working closely with Enterprise Ireland and other agencies, WestBIC focuses on supporting new innovative enterprises which have high growth potential and can contribute to economic development and jobs in the region, providing tailored support through the initial stages, from concept to commercialisation. Assisted companies enjoy a survival rate in excess of 75%. Over the last four years, across the West and North West, WestBIC supported in excess of 300 Start ups and early-stage innovative SMEs, with a yearly average of 15 candidates being supported for Enterprise Ireland funding and supports.

WestBIC also manages the Business Angel Programme in the region - a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and the Irish BICs (the others being in Dublin, Cork and the South East). The Business Angels Programme actively works to increase the number of Angel Investors supporting early stage companies by both assisting the investor readiness of pre-screened Start-ups and matching them with suitable Angels who bring a combination of expertise and much needed capital to facilitate business growth and jobs.

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Its role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland provides a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services, such as:

- research and insights into the tourism industry and visitor experience
- advice on how to start and grow a tourism business
- latest tourism industry news
- quality assurance schemes
- management development programmes
- online and offline marketing training and support
- best practice and case studies
- access to funding

Tourism Ireland is the North South body with responsibility for the overseas promotion of the island of Ireland as a Tourist destination.

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland actively promote and market the tourist potential of the North East/ North West, including the Wild Atlantic Way (which covers counties Sligo Leitrim and Donegal), the Lakelands Region (which includes Cavan and Monaghan) and Ireland's Ancient East (Louth).

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes.

The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-Erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal. The Shannon-Erne Waterway and the Erne Navigation are important features in the region's landscape and provide jobs in the tourism and recreational sectors. Waterways Ireland's role in maintaining these waterways supports job creation and retention in the North East/ North West.

Marine Institute

The Marine Institute was established to undertake, coordinate, promote and assist in marine research and development and to provide services related to research and development that will promote economic development and create employment and protect the marine environment.

It provides a range of services to ensure the aquaculture industry operates to international best practice standards and in accordance with national and European legislation, including seafood safety programmes, marine environmental monitoring services, oceanography and seabed mapping.

Given the importance to the North East/ North West of sea-based activities such as aquaculture and fishing, the Marine Institute has an important contribution to make to supporting research and development and the jobs potential in the region.

Bord Bia

Bord Bia (The Irish Food Board) is the State agency charged with the promotion, trade development and marketing of the Irish food, drink and horticulture industry. Its mission is to deliver effective and innovative market development, promotion and information services to assist companies grow and win new business. Bord Bia works in partnership with enterprise to increase the sales and exports of Irish food, drink and horticulture by developing long-term relationships between Irish companies and trade buyers.

Bord Bia offers a wide range of services to small food businesses that will help to develop skills and competencies and also grow the business. Bord Bia operates programmes to develop and foster contact between buyers and Irish companies, including participation under the 'Ireland' umbrella brand at international trade exhibitions, and co-coordinating inward buying visits.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) is the State agency with responsibility for developing the Irish sea fishing and aquaculture industries. Approximately 11,000 people are employed in the sector, mostly in

coastal communities. Because the seafood industry is widely dispersed around the coastline, it plays a key role in the sustainable development of the economic and social fabric of many coastal communities.

BIM's mission is to grow a thriving Irish seafood industry; expand the raw material base, add value and develop efficient supply chains that together deliver on the Government's Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025 growth targets for the various sectors. BIM provides the following supports to industry through its three development divisions:

- technical expertise
- business support
- funding
- training
- and by promoting responsible environmental practices

BIM has offices located in Killybegs, Dun Laoghaire, Clonakilty, Castletownbere, Galway and Greencastle.

Teagasc

Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development Authority – is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. Its mission is to support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and the broader bioeconomy that will underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

Given the importance of agri-food to the Irish economy, Teagasc has an important contribution to make to support the jobs potential in the North East/ North West.

While the priority on many farms is to improve the technical performance of the existing farm enterprises, on others there may be opportunities to add value to the farm output or to diversify into other activities. Teagasc's 'Options' Programme can help farm families to take a look at the viability of the farm and farm household and provide them with information on a variety of diversification ideas. The programme is implemented mainly through a series of 'Farm Options' workshops, providing advice from a range of specialists and entrepreneurs in basic farm finance, idea generation, rural tourism, organic farming, forestry, artisan food production, direct selling, applying for LEADER grant aid, farm social supports, basic business planning and more.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The role of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. SEAI provides a range of programmes and services to homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is a key actor in providing research and advice to Government on sustainable energy policy, including renewables and energy efficiency.

Coillte

Coillte is a commercial State owned company with operations in forestry, wood panel product manufacture, renewable energy and land. The company employs approximately 950 people in Ireland, the UK and Netherlands and manages an estate of over 440,000 hectares or close to 1 million acres. Coillte manages its estate for commercial forestry, recreation and biodiversity as well as providing land for a range of uses from renewable energy and other infrastructure developments, to recreational use as well as commercial development.

ConnectIreland

Succeed in Ireland is a Government-supported initiative to create new jobs by harnessing the power of the global Diaspora to attract into Ireland foreign companies that are expanding internationally. The initiative provides financial rewards to those that help attract new, sustainable jobs into the country. *Succeed in Ireland* complements the work of IDA Ireland and is delivered under contract by ConnectIreland.

In 2014, ConnectIreland began running a more regional and community focused campaign and introduced their Community Action Plan initiative. The overall objective of the campaign is to create visibility and awareness jointly with the 31 City and County Councils of the key role that communities can play in job creation through the use of the ConnectIreland mechanism. Each county is encouraged to appoint a local ambassador who will champion the campaign in their area. The Community Action Plan is an ongoing campaign that has already yielded company introductions in several counties.

ConnectIreland's *Connectivation* competition asks members of Third Level institutions to submit engagement models to assist in increasing the audience of the ConnectIreland message and ultimately raise further awareness of the advantages of 'doing business' in the region and the importance of the link between diaspora relations and increasing FDI. The competition will be looking for an understanding of both the areas of diaspora engagement and FDI by competitors.

4.9 European and Cross Border Initiatives

The role of EU projects and partnerships has and will continue to play an important role in achieving the regions objectives. As the North East/ North West strives to become more competitive and compete not only at national, but also at international level it is increasingly looking at ways to become more innovative and to develop new products and services.

Increased investment in R&D and innovation are essential for the North East/ North West to enhance its competitiveness. By participating in EU projects/partnerships in these specific areas the region will attempt to exchange experience and knowledge and build strategic alliances with other EU regions.

Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

The role of SEUPB is to manage cross-border European Union Structural Funds programmes in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and parts of Western Scotland.

They are the body responsible for the European Union's Cross-border Programme for Territorial Cooperation, Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland (otherwise known as the INTERREG IVA Programme).

The €283m INTERREG VA 2014-2020 Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), is one of 60 programmes across the European Union designed to promote greater levels of cross-border cooperation and has been designed to build upon opportunities for enhanced economic and social development across the region. The eligible area for the INTERREG VA Programme includes Northern Ireland, the Border region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

The Programme has four key priority areas:

- Research & Innovation;
- the Environment;
- Sustainable Transport and
- Health & Social Care.

Some of the key outputs within these priority areas are:

- 1,408 SMEs receiving support, 1,408 SMEs receiving non-financial support and 19 SMEs receiving grants
- 514 years' worth of PhD (or above) level research
- 5 research institutions and 10 enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects.
- 10,000 people benefitting from improved wastewater treatment
- 3 river water quality improvement projects completed
- 4,500 ha of habitats supported
- 1 cross-border, multi-modal public transport hub encompassing integrated services
- 80 km of new cross-border greenways created
- 50,000 people accessing a wide-range of different health and social care services

In recent years there has been significant investment in upgrading the region's infrastructure and the regional economy has experienced steady growth. This recent economic development has been assisted by the Northern Ireland Assembly, the North South Ministerial Council and the relevant Cross-border Implementation Bodies under the Good Friday Agreement, and the recent economic growth in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, provides new opportunities for peace and economic prosperity in the North East/ North West.

Cross Border Initiatives

Over the past forty years local authorities on both sides of the border have recognised the benefits of cross-border co-operation, to develop new products and markets. Cross-border bodies such as the East Border Region Ltd, ICBAN and North-West Partnership Board Ltd have developed cross border links with local industries and attracted funding for training, innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives under successive EU Interreg funding programmes for enterprise and tourism projects. The cross-border co-operation has supported shared developments such as the Kelvin project, shared IT developments in Letterkenny-Derry, enterprise supports and mentoring for small businesses through the Plato programme, engineering hubs (South Tyrone/Monaghan area) and sustainable energy programmes (Newry/Dundalk).

Centre For Cross Border Studies

The Centre for Cross Border Studies has a specific and unique role in contributing to the increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland through:

- promoting and improving the quality of Cross-Border Cooperation between public bodies, and between public bodies, business and civil society;
- improving the capacity of people involved in social and economic development of the island to engage in mutually beneficial Cross-Border Cooperation; and
- addressing information gaps and other barriers that constrain cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation through research and provision of resources, tools and other practical support.

Provision of services to cross-border projects and networks is an important strand of CCBS' work. All the services offered by the Centre are complementary to the vision, mission and values of CCBS, supporting collaboration across borders. Other services such as the information provided by the Border People project and training and mentoring using the tools developed as part of their research programme are an integral part of supporting and promoting cross-border mobility and cooperation.

Chapter 5: Strengths and Opportunities

Strengths

Enterprise Mix

The North East/ North West is diverse in terms of its enterprise mix. The North East has growing clusters in international business services, mainly Financial Services (Payments) and consumer goods and manufacturing. The North East also has vibrant clusters in the food and engineering sectors.

There are two quite distinct clusters in the North West.

1. Manufacturing of products such as Medical Devices, Pharmaceuticals and Automotive components is a long standing activity in the North West, strongly linked to the heritage in precision engineering.
2. ICT services - including software development and deployment for Financial Services / Insurance has been a very strong growth sector for the North West (Letterkenny).

Other established sectors in the North East/ North West include Food, Manufacturing, Engineering and Tourism.

Internationally traded services have gained a foothold in the Region over recent years. Recent connections into international broadband infrastructures are a positive development for realising future potential in this area.

There is also a strong entrepreneurial spirit in the North East/ North West that can prove attractive to companies, both multinational and indigenous, that are considering investing in the Region.

Education & Research Assets

The three Institutes of Technology (IoTs) in the Region– Letterkenny, Sligo and Dundalk, together with the four Education and Training Boards (ETBs)-are key resources in terms of skills development, knowledge transfer and research; and their campus incubation facilities provide valuable supports to prospective entrepreneurs and small businesses. The IoTs and ETBs are increasingly proactive in their development of industry-academic linkage. Since the launch of the process to develop this Plan, they have also come together with the enterprise development agencies, employer representatives and other key stakeholders to establish the North East and North West Regional Skills Fora to provide a more structured and collaborative approach to building the supply of skills across the North East/ North West.

In addition, the Innovation Centres located in the IoTs are a hub for regional development in the North East/ North West. The Centre exists to help and support entrepreneurs, nurture new start-ups and fledgling enterprises and assist established businesses develop and expand.

Property for Enterprise

The provision of property solutions for enterprise plays a critical role in nurturing start ups, growing SMEs and attracting FDI. The North East/ North West has a wide range of property solutions available for enterprise, from campus incubation facilities, to large scale serviced business parks, such as Letterkenny Business & Technology Park, Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair and Dundalk Business & Technology Park. IDA Ireland has secured planning permission for an Advanced Technology Building in Sligo with another building planned for Dundalk.

LYIT is involved in the cross border North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) initiative. The NWRSP, in association with LYIT's partners NISP (Northern Ireland Science Park) and NWRCBG (North West Region Cross Border Group), allows the world renowned Science Park brand, operating model, and support programmes be brought to the North West at Fort George in Derry and at the CoLab at LYIT.

Opportunities

Tourism

Tourism is an established and important enterprise sector in the North East/ North West. Inclusion in three of Fáilte Ireland's national experience propositions - the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and the Lakelands and Waterways - and the range of exceptional natural, cultural, heritage, recreational and sporting tourism assets across the Region, offer potential to increase visitor numbers and length of stay to support economic growth across all counties within the region.

Food

The well-established food production and processing activities in the North East/ North West, offer potential for further development, especially in terms of enhanced product development and processing activities and the production of higher value-add, specialist, locally produced food products.

Fishing and Marine

Killybegs is the primary national fishing port. Its strategic location along the Atlantic and natural deep water harbour facilities, has enabled it to evolve a state of the art pelagic catching and processing sector. This sector represents Ireland's largest seafood export, both in volume and value terms, with 184, 326 MT of exports worth €219,742,000 in 2014.

The natural assets in the North West provide a platform for achieving further growth for Ireland's seafood sector, capitalising on existing and potential raw materials from both wild and farmed resources.

Energy

The renewable energy sector, encompassing a broad range of energy related activities, is one which has shown strong growth in recent years. The sector is one from which the North East/ North West has an opportunity to benefit.

Innovation and R&D

Opportunities to build on the research assets within the Region include increasing awareness and take up of innovation supports, supporting further collaboration between researchers and industry and through supporting innovation start ups through campus incubation centres.

Cross Border

There are initiatives in certain areas, (such as entrepreneurship promotion, innovation, infrastructure, tourism and other enterprise sector development initiatives), that benefit from cross-regional and cross-border collaborative approaches (for example, the TRANSFORM pilot programme), PROPEL enterprise incubation programmes promoted by Invest Northern Ireland (INI) and Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the Health Initiative, Co-Operation & Working Together (CAWT)

The €283m INTERREG VA 2014-2020 Programme, is a cross-border Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). It is designed to promote greater levels of cross-border cooperation and has been devised to build upon opportunities for enhanced economic and social development across the region. The Programme has four key priority areas: Research & Innovation; the Environment; Sustainable Transport and Health & Social Care.

Cross Border Economic Development

Through a joined-up approach, Newry and Dundalk have the critical mass to compete in the global economy, thereby appealing to higher value segments of the business chain by offering sizeable pools of suitably qualified workers, adequate supporting infrastructure, and good-quality public and commercial service. The Report Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region: Supporting the Implementation of Cross-Border Collaborative Frameworks, 2009 advocates that both central and local government authorities on either side of the border work collaboratively to deliver new employment opportunities in Newry and Dundalk.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and signed by both Louth County Council and Newry Mourne & Down District Council. The MOU sets out the detailed workings which seek to support and promote the economic development and competitiveness of the region. Both councils agreed to strengthen existing co-operation and a number of projects have been developed under the following themes;

- Renewable Energy and Green Technology,
- Tourism and Recreation,
- Sustainable Economic Growth, Job Creation,
- Emergency Planning.

This initiative could be replicated across the entire North East/ North West.

Chapter 6: Driving Entrepreneurship

A key part of the Government's plan for growth and job-creation is focused on building a powerful engine of indigenous enterprise, from start-ups to internationally trading companies.

Key priority areas for action to drive entrepreneurs and start ups in the North East/ North West will be to:

- **Increase the number of start ups in the region by a minimum of 25% through promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship through targeted programmes and initiatives;**
- **Increase the survival rate of start ups through mentoring and enhanced take up of the suite of enterprise supports available from the State and the private sector;**
- **Build a pipeline of new entrepreneurs in the North East/ North West through student enterprise initiatives;**
- **Target an increase in employment in the region by 10 to 15% over the period to 2020, resulting in the creation of 28,000 more jobs compared to 2014;**
- **Deliver equity awareness events and workshops in the region to raise awareness of national supports for access to finance;**
- **Increase the number of enterprises and towns within the region adopting on-line trading;**
- **Develop additional enterprise/ innovation units in the Region to enhance the availability of accommodation for start ups;**
- **Develop local level enterprise development plans at county/ Gaeltacht area level to support economic development throughout the region;**
- **Support and facilitate networks for start ups and local businesses in the region.**

These actions areas reflect the priorities which emerged through stakeholder engagement in the North East/ North West.

Entrepreneurship and start ups

There is a significant opportunity for entrepreneurs and small businesses to take the lead in job creation in the North East/ North West, particularly in rural areas.

There are a number of bodies in the region providing supports to microenterprises, start-ups and early-stage SMEs. Together, they offer a suite of supports that address the needs of stakeholders which can be further enhanced through increased collaboration.

Enterprise Ireland will drive an increase in the numbers of start ups and HPSUs in the North East/ North West through rigorous deployment of a suite of enterprise supports, including:

- Enterprise Start workshops to assist new start up companies in the North East/ North West;
- New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme, delivered in partnership with Dundalk Institute of Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and IT Sligo
- Providing incubation space and wrap up supports, such as mentoring and modern office and research environments through Campus Incubation Centres in Dundalk IT, Letterkenny IT and IT Sligo, to support innovative enterprises and stimulate business success
- Promoting national supports available to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses and aim for increased take up of these supports within the region.

Each of the six **Local Enterprise Offices** in the North East/ North West will:

- Drive an increase in the number and survival rate of start ups through driving regional participation in Start Your Own Business courses and a suite of training programmes such as Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, and Mentoring
- Develop a pipeline of young entrepreneurs through Student Enterprise programmes, involving 2,675 students in almost 100 schools in the region
- Maximise collaboration with the 29 Community Enterprise Centres across all six counties in the region to assist start ups and existing businesses to grow and develop
- Step up the take up of national schemes that can help enterprises grow such as Microfinance

Údarás na Gaeltachta will drive an increase in the numbers of start-ups and HPSUs in the Gaeltacht region through

- The promotion of its financial and non-financial schemes to business in a variety of sectors.
- The promotion of national schemes and supporting applicants to apply for these schemes
- The provision of incubation and manufacturing space for start-ups at Micro and SME Level.
- The promotion of national supports available to start ups and existing businesses to access finance and provide supports to ensure increased take up of these supports.

Local enterprise focus

The eight Local Development Companies in the Region will provide supports to start-ups, established microenterprises and social enterprises as part of their remit to support social and economic development in the region. Local Development Strategies are currently being developed for the period 2015-2020 which will include clear targets for enterprise support and job creation.

WestBIC also supports start-ups and early-stage SMEs in the North East/ North West and is the official EU Business and Innovation Centre for Ireland's Border, Midlands and Western Region.

An Aislann Ghaoth Dobhair is a modern innovation hub on Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair which is available to support and accommodate entrepreneurs from concept to commercialisation stage.

In the North East, PayPal is working with the wider Louth Economic Forum to foster existing businesses and grow new enterprises in County Louth.

In the North West, the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy (USEFE) Project is a joint initiative between Bord Na Mona, the ESB and Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon Local Authorities. The purpose of this initiative is to show how business led regional development can lead to economic growth and job creation across Leitrim, Roscommon, Cavan and Longford.

USEFE is involved with a number of different sectors such as:

- Food Sector
- Forestry & Energy Sector
- Tourism Sector
- Creative Sector
- Manufacturing Sector
- Pharma/Healthcare Sector
- Diaspora Sector

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- Proactively assist regional economic development through the engagement of key businesses and regional stakeholders in order to identify advantages, synergies and opportunities;
- Facilitate existing and develop new enterprise sector groups to deliver on the advantages, synergies and opportunities for the region through networking, shared resources, economies of scale, cross sectoral engagement and individual projects;
- Promote the region internally and externally in order to maximise the region's economic potential based on its key advantages, capacities and opportunities and through active engagement with wider economic initiatives and funding opportunities;
- Foster an even stronger spirit of entrepreneurship in the USEFE region by sharing knowledge, experience and expertise between the various participating businesses;
- Ensure that there is an effective and co-ordinated executive support system in place to maximise the potential of the initiative, and to secure further participation of businesses across the region.

Enterprise and Incubation space

Incubation space is an important requirement to support start-up companies. The North East/ North West is well served by twenty nine Community Enterprise Centres supported by Enterprise Ireland. The *Community Enterprise Initiatives* competitive call for proposals launched by Enterprise Ireland in May 2015 will provide an opportunity, within the North East/ North West and other regions, for a step-up in new and innovative approaches to providing incubation space, supporting hubs, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Campus Incubation Centres

Since 2001, Enterprise Ireland has invested over €40 million in the construction of business incubators at the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) around Ireland including Regional Development Centre, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Synergy Centre, Sligo Institute of Technology and CoLab, Letterkenny Institute of Technology. By investing in the construction of campus incubators this helped realise three broad objectives:

1. Foster entrepreneurship and campus company activity
2. Help realise the commercial potential of Ireland's research community
3. Support balanced regional development

Campus Entrepreneurship Enterprise Network

An excellent example of collaboration within the region is provided by the involvement of the three Institutes of Technology within the region in the Campus Entrepreneurship Enterprise Network. CEEN is the HEI led Irish national network for promoting and developing entrepreneurship and enterprise at third level. CEEN aims to create a sustainable national platform for raising the profile, extending engagement and further developing entrepreneurship across the Irish HEI sector by:

1. Providing a vehicle for a national dialogue between academia, industry and voluntary and public sectors on the development of entrepreneurship education;
2. Promoting excellence in the field by stimulating research, developing new pedagogy, evaluating and disseminating best practice and creating an evidence base around 'what works';
3. Establishing a national communications network to facilitate networking and collaboration within and between HEIs for academic and non-academic staff and the student body;
4. Demonstrating the economic business case for continuous investment and will support the development of new programmes and initiatives to promote entrepreneurship education across the wider HEI sector.

This network is further building on the successes of the Accelerating Campus Entrepreneurship Education (ACE). The ACE project was an innovative collaboration between IT Sligo, DKIT, CIT, ITB and NUIG, encapsulating the key characteristics of effective entrepreneurship education by creating a forum for sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise across disciplines and across institutions.

The collective vision for the SIF ACE Initiative is to deliver a framework for embedding entrepreneurship education, in order to create an intellectually stimulating arena for entrepreneurship, enterprise activity and value creation which can be translated into tangible economic and social benefits for the Irish economy.

As part of this project IT Sligo has developed and delivers an Entrepreneurship module in the Department of Social Sciences, involving third year students working on the feasibility of a business idea. IT Sligo brought together leading knowledge in innovation and experts in business strategy and management, assessing entrepreneurial ability, market research, market validation, sales and communications to deliver all workshops, mentoring and coaching. Students were provided with access to space in the Innovation Centre and networking and events with existing businesses.

Access to Finance

InterTradeIreland will promote access to finance for Start-Ups through workshops under their “Funding for Growth” initiative, equity awareness events, equity advisory clinics and the annual Seedcorn Competition, aimed at early and new start companies, which is run on a regional basis across four regions.

Through the Western Development Commission (WDC) Investment Fund, which in the North East/ North West covers the counties of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim, WDC will provide seed and venture capital and loans to small businesses in these counties, with a particular focus on the creative industries.

Start Up Support

The range and variety of supports, information and guidance to the start-up community is extensive, covering finance, business, property, training and mentoring and networking. Working in that space are national agencies, the Local Enterprise Offices, Community Enterprise Centres, Business Innovation Centres, Local Authorities, third-level colleges, Skillnets, local development companies and LEADER as well as private organisations such as Chambers. There is an onus on the various public and private support organisations to ensure that access to these supports is consistent, coherent and easily accessible to potential entrepreneurs. A major reason for establishing the Local Enterprise Office network was to serve as the ‘first stop shop’ service for support and guidance at local level.

Delivery of the following actions, in addition to the ongoing activities of Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Udarás na Gaeltachta and bodies such as Teagasc, Local Development Companies etc. will help to promote entrepreneurship and increase the number of start ups in the North East/ North West.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Start ups		
1.	<p>Increase the number of entrepreneurs and start ups in the North East/ North West through initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise Start workshops, • New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in Dundalk Institute of Technology, IT Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology; • Start your own Business Programmes; and • Enterprise related training. 	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland and LEOs, IoTs
2.	Enterprise Ireland will implement the findings from the review of the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in order to evolve the programme to maximise positive impact on entrepreneurship in the region.	2016	EI
3.	Enterprise Ireland will agree and implement a Service Level Agreement with all Business Innovation Centres (BIC) to ensure their interaction with start-ups in the region is deepened and the value maximised	2016	EI, BICs
4.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will implement measures to support early stage business with a particular focus on regional competitive advantage in specific sectors, including cultural tourism, audio-visual and digital technology, marine resources, niche manufacturing, food beverages and creative language-based services.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
5.	<p>Each of the 3 Local Enterprise Offices in the North East will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Local Enterprise Development Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for the North East LEOs for 2015 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over €1.1 million will be available in grant assistance and enterprise development supports • Almost 438 participants will attend Start Your Own Business courses • Over 670 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring) • 1700 students in almost 60 schools will participate in Student Enterprise programme • 60 Online Trading Vouchers will be awarded to eligible enterprises • 20 microfinance applications will be processed and submitted to MFI <p>These targets will be further developed in 2016 and 2017.</p>	2015-2018	LEOs, Local Authorities, EI
6.	<p>Each of the 3 Local Enterprise Offices in the North West will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Local Enterprise Development Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for the North West LEOs for 2015 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost €1.1 million will be available in grant assistance and enterprise development supports • Over 150 participants will attend Start Your Own Business courses • Over 400 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring) 	2015-2018	LEOs, Local Authorities, EI

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 1,000 students in almost 40 schools will participate in Student Enterprise programme 60 Online Trading Vouchers will be awarded to eligible enterprises Almost 20 microfinance applications will be processed and submitted to MFI <p>These targets will be further developed in 2016 and 2017.</p>		
7.	The Local Enterprise Offices will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop	Ongoing	EI/ LEOs, Local authorities, ÚnaG, Community Enterprise Centres
8.	<p>The local authorities in the North East/ North West, as in other areas, will each develop and publish a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), setting out, for a six-year period, objectives and actions to support economic development and local and community development in their administrative regions.</p> <p>Following adoption of the plans Local Authorities will carry out a scoping exercise to identify opportunities for collaboration on a regional level where similar actions have been identified across a number of plans.</p>	2015	Local authorities.
9.	The eight Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Local Development Companies will work with the LEOs, with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services.	Ongoing	LCDC, Local Authorities, EI/LEOs, DSP, ÚnaG
10.	Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme over the period 2015-2020 will be developed.	2016-2016	LCDCs

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
11.	<p>Local Economic and Community plans to include sub-committee with all public agencies responsible for start-ups to meet quarterly to develop a process for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Sharing and communicating information on funding supports to start ups from different agencies. ii. Coordinating on start-up awards to positively promote entrepreneurship in the region iii. Identifying ambassadors for business in each county. iv. Communicating to businesses the opportunities that exist from European funding available to the region with a view to maximising the drawdown of European funding. 	Ongoing	Local Authorities Regional Assembly, and other relevant stakeholders
12.	Louth Economic Forum will pilot an initiative to evaluate the coherence of the various start-up supports at County level, to create a road map for users and to consider ways through which they can be promoted to ensure a joined-up, comprehensive, yet easily accessible, information and guidance service to potential entrepreneurs	2016	Louth Economic Forum
13.	<p>Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the national €5m million Community Enterprise Initiative.</p> <p>Enterprise Ireland will support and monitor successful applicants under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative Scheme launched in 2015.</p>	2015 and 2016	Enterprise Ireland
14.	Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the National €5 million Competitive LEO fund.	2015 and 2016	Enterprise Ireland
15.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop annual enterprise development plans for the Gaeltacht area in the region, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.	2015-2017	ÚnaG

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
16.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will target an increase in new jobs of between 15 and 25% in the North West as well as continuing to support 1,942 jobs.	2015-2017	ÚnaG
17.	Promote the Enterprise Awards Scheme (BTWEAS) for people who return to work, on the back to work enterprise allowance scheme to provide support to new businesses	Ongoing	LCDCs
18.	Run a national pilot competitive entrepreneurial development programme to target up to 48 female entrepreneurs based outside of urban centres.	2015	Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	Mentoring & Networks		
19.	Identify baseline of existing business networks and support and grow networks for start-ups and local businesses.	2016	EI/LEOs, ÚnaG
	Access to Finance		
20.	InterTrade Ireland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis, to give companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity. Local companies will have the opportunity to compete on a regional basis for a prize of €20,000. The regional winner can go on to compete for overall prizes of €50,000 and €100,000.	2015-2019	InterTradeIreland
21.	Increase awareness and take up of national public and private sector supports to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses.	Ongoing	EI/LEOs, Local Authorities, and other relevant public bodies
22.	InterTradeIreland will host 4 workshops under their “Funding for Growth” initiative in the North East/ North West to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses, as well as providing an opportunity to meet with a corporate finance expert.	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland,
23.	InterTradeIreland will deliver a series of equity awareness events at regional level including the unique equity advisory clinics where	2015-2016	InterTradeIreland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	companies can meet with an equity expert, business planning workshops and venture capital case studies.		
	Ensuring the availability of work space for entrepreneurs		
24.	Undertake a review of incubation space and property solutions within the region, from pre start-up incubation facilities, through to scaling up to full manufacturing capacity. Identify gaps/shortages and develop a programme of investment requirements.	2016	North East/ North West local authorities, ÚnaG
25.	Identify strategic sites in the region that have low occupancy or are vacant or derelict with a view to making them accessible for start-ups and SMEs (e.g. creative sector, living labs, hot desks) through incentive schemes to encourage occupancy.	2016	Local Authorities, ÚnaG, Private Sector,
26.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will upgrade the broadband infrastructure to its business parks by investing in fibre optic.	2015-2017	ÚnaG
27.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop additional enterprise / innovation units in Aislann, Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair to provide accommodation for start-ups.	2015-2017	ÚnaG

Chapter 7: Supporting Business to Grow and Scale

A core objective of this Action Plan is to assist companies in the North East/ North West to grow, scale and export, in order to increase job creation and contribute to the regional and national economy. Companies based in the region supported by the Enterprise Agencies are a valuable base to grow; with EI supporting 599 enterprises, IDA supporting 77 client companies, and the LEOs supporting 1,049 enterprises.

Key ambitions under this chapter of the Action Plan for Jobs for the North East/ North West are to:

- **Assist more companies in the North East/ North West to achieve scale and grow internationally;**
- **Get more companies in the region exporting, including cross Border export opportunities, which often serve as a first point of export for Irish SMEs;**
- **Increase employment in the existing base of companies by strengthening their capacity to scale up their business and win new markets. The existing base of over 1,720 enterprises supported by the agencies, which now employ over 35,500 people will be a particular focus of this effort;**
- **Build on IDA/EI's Global Sourcing initiative to maximise procurement opportunities for EI clients with MNCs supported by IDA Ireland;**
- **Assist companies in the North East/ North West in tendering for opportunities to supply products and services to the public sector and to multinational companies.**

Accessing International Markets

Success in export markets is crucial to the long-term growth of Irish enterprises and the Irish economy.

To get more companies in the North East/ North West exporting, Enterprise Ireland will:

- Run export events, workshops and programmes to assist companies with exporting potential help new and early exporters to develop the tools and techniques to succeed in export markets.
- To ensure that Irish business owners and managers have the essential capabilities and capacity to support ambitious international growth strategies, Enterprise Ireland will provide supports that address gaps in client capability and capacity, in key functional areas such as Lean, Leadership, Skills Development and Competitiveness Building.

- To ensure that Irish companies have adequate and appropriate access to funding to meet their international growth aspirations, Enterprise Ireland will provide funding directly in the form of equity and funding for expansion, research & development and training.
- To support client companies enter new markets, Enterprise Ireland will provide supports to assist companies with internationalisation plans, including access to Enterprise Ireland's International Network of overseas offices, International Trade Missions, Sales and Marketing Review tools and financial supports such as the Market Access Grant and the Business Links programme.

The nature and level of support offered to Enterprise Ireland client companies will depend on the individual company's development needs and is assessed in consultation with their assigned development adviser from within Enterprise Ireland.

Local Enterprise Offices will support local business to grow and scale through their suite of programmes including mentoring, marketing and training supports.

InterTradeIreland will support businesses throughout the island of Ireland to take advantage of cross-border trade and innovation opportunities, including the provision of supports to help companies pursue export opportunities to Northern Ireland.

In addition, all Enterprise agencies will work with other business networks and stakeholders to help enterprises develop and grow.

Public Procurement

Enterprise Ireland, InterTrade Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta and LEOs will work with SMEs in the region to support them in tendering for opportunities to supply products and services to the public sector.

Global Sourcing Initiative

The Global Sourcing Initiative is a joint agency initiative between IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland to maximise procurement opportunities for Enterprise Ireland clients with Ireland based MNC's supported by IDA Ireland. The primary objective is to:

- Facilitate Irish manufacturing and service companies to develop and consolidate their relationships with Irish based multinational companies.
- Increase the level of activity between Enterprise Ireland client companies and IDA Ireland supported MNC's based in Ireland through sales, partnerships, R&D collaborations, introducing innovation.
- Develop the level of exports of Irish companies to multinational corporations globally through buy-in from their Irish based entities.
- Raise the awareness within MNC's in Ireland of the innovative capabilities and solutions of Irish companies.
- Facilitate regionally based networking events where Irish companies can directly engage with procurement teams from key Irish based multinational companies from a wide variety of sectors.

In October 2015 Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland undertook a Trade and Investment Mission in Ireland. The objective was to provide networking opportunities for Enterprise Ireland clients with IDA Ireland clients and to maximise sales opportunities for Irish companies with multinational companies based in Ireland and to raise the profile of the Global Sourcing Initiative. Minister Bruton led the Mission over two days in 4 locations (Dundalk, Waterford, Cork and Galway). In Dundalk, over 70 companies attended. These Agencies will build on his work in the North East/ North West over the lifetime of this plan.

Actions to support enterprises in the North East/ North West to grow and scale are set out below.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
28.	Enterprise Ireland will run a “ Get ready to Export” in the North East/ North West in 2016	2016	EI
29.	Enterprise Ireland will run an “Export Workshop” in the North East/ North West in 2016	2016	EI
30.	InterTradelreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the North East/ North West.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
31.	InterTradelreland will host a “Going North” workshop to support local business and create awareness of opportunities that exist.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
32.	InterTradelreland will set a target of at least 14 Acumen approvals to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
33.	Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradelreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
34.	Through the INTERREG VA Programme SEUPB will support cross-border business investment in Research & Innovation with an ERDF allocation of €15.9m. The key outputs will focus on SMEs with 1,408 receiving a range of support including: collaboration with research institutions; innovation advice; collaborative research projects.	2016 - 2020	SEUPB

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Procurement Opportunities		
35.	<p>InterTradeIreland will deliver 4 public tendering workshops for SMEs in the North East/ North West over the period 2015-2016 and will provide relevant training for local small businesses in the region.</p> <p>InterTradeIreland will also promote public tendering opportunities to SMEs in the region including cross border public sector opportunities, consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts.</p>	<p>2015-2016</p> <p>2015-2016</p>	<p>InterTradeIreland in partnership with local LEOs, ÚnaG and other relevant local organisations.</p>
36.	<p>Build on the global sourcing and collaboration initiative and increase activity in this area to enhance the regional offering and increase collaboration with existing clients, and provide opportunities for Irish Companies to engage with IDA companies.</p>	Ongoing	EI, IDA, UnaG, LEOs

Chapter 8: Fostering Innovation

Innovation plays an important role in maintaining firms' competitive advantage in fast-changing markets, which is critical both to sustaining employment and driving future employment growth.

Key ambitions of the North East/ North West Action Plan for Jobs in this area are to:

- **Get more of the region's enterprises engaged in research, development and innovation to enable them to remain at the cutting edge of innovation and to achieve competitive advantage for the region as a strong knowledge economy;**
- **Maximise the impact of research on the enterprise base in the region by increasing knowledge and skills transfer from the Higher Education Institutes to businesses in the region;**
- **Enhance the impact of the innovation centres and hubs within the region, including the Innovation Centre in IT Sligo, DKIT's Regional Development Centre, CoLab at LYIT and Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair agus Fiontarlann Chill Chartha in the Donegal Gaeltacht.**

Research Assets

The three Institutes of Technology in the Region are key resources in terms of knowledge transfer and research; and their campus incubation facilities provide valuable supports to prospective entrepreneurs and small businesses. The Institutes of Technology are increasingly proactive in their development of industry-academic linkage.

Research centres include the WiSAR Lab, Wind Energy Centre, Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials Centre (PEM), Centre for Research in the Social Professions (CRiSP), National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT), Ion Channel Biotechnology Centre (ICBC) and Centre for Renewable Energy (CREDIT). Further detail on the research centres in the North East/ North West is set out in Appendix A to this report.

Another key research asset is the pool of highly educated graduates from the region's Further Education and Training / third level colleges and institutions.

Further key research assets within the region include:

- The Innovation Centre, IT Sligo, which is a hub for regional development in the Region. The Centre exists to help and support entrepreneurs, nurture new start-ups and fledgling enterprises and assist established businesses develop and expand.
- Dundalk Institute's Regional Development Centre, which is the commercially oriented interface between DKIT and the industrial, commercial and business life of the region, and which makes available the expertise, facilities and resources of the Institute for the wider benefit of the regional economy. The centre is supported by and works in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.

- CoLab at LYIT, which is the innovation centre of the Northwest, providing incubation space and business supports to early-stage enterprises derived from research and development. Their focus is on the high technology and knowledge intensive sectors. The aim of this centre is to enable business and academia to interact to create viable enterprises for the Northwest that will secure the region's future in terms of job creation, innovation and export potential.
- The Hive, Carrick on Shannon, is a high quality, innovative and technology focused incubation unit providing workspace for up to 14 SMEs and facilitating the growth of new and existing technology based enterprises.

In addition, Údarás na Gaeltachta has two Innovation hubs within its Donegal Gaeltacht region: Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair agus Fiontarlann Chill Chartha (managed by WestBIC).

Fig 6 – CoLab at Letterkenny IT



Supports for Innovation

Enterprise Ireland plays a key role in supporting research and innovation in the North East/ North West. In addition to providing in-company research supports, Enterprise Ireland will:

- promote outreach activities to industry, aimed at getting more companies engaged in collaborative research, development and innovation;
- through its Technology Gateways in Letterkenny and Dundalk, as part of the Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateway National Network which acts as an access point for enterprise in the Region, facilitate access to research resources and infrastructure across the State;
- operate a range of programmes, including Innovation Vouchers and Innovation Partnerships to help companies undertake collaborative research with third level researchers.

IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development and Innovation Programme to incentivise client companies in the North East/ North West to develop new processes and products.

Údarás na Gaeltachta will continue to promote and support in-company research supports along with the promotion of all national initiatives.

InterTradelreland will promote its Fusion programme in the region, which helps embed innovation capability in SMEs through the introduction of new product and process development opportunities and will also drive participation in its Challenge programme, which provides SMEs with the opportunity to learn how to develop a culture of innovation.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
37.	Enterprise Ireland, through the Technology Transfer Offices, will promote outreach activities to industry.	Ongoing	Technology Transfer Offices
38.	The Technology Gateway National Network will continue to carry out industry research. Within this, the WISAR Technology Gateway based in Letterkenny IT will hold an industry open day each year 2016/2017.	2016 and 2017	LyIT- WISAR Technology Gateway, EI
39.	Based on the review of the Regional Innovation Fora in Galway and Cork, Enterprise Ireland will facilitate a Regional Innovation Forum to encourage peer to peer interactions and SME HEI linkages to encourage innovation (focussing on areas such as people, resources, training and research) in the region.	2017	EI, HEIs
40.	The ETBs and IoTs in the region will continue to build on their engagement with industry and seek to increase industry collaboration within the region.	Ongoing	Institutes of Technology, ETBs ,EI
41.	InterTradelreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the region and will set a target of at least 18 Fusion approvals in 2015/16.	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
42.	InterTradelreland will provide access to its Challenge Programme to SMEs in the region	2015-2016	InterTradelreland
43.	IDA will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the region to develop new processes and products.	Ongoing	IDA Ireland,

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
44.	Údarás will continue to roll out its Research, Development & Innovation Program to incentivise client companies in the Gaeltacht region to develop new processes and products.	Ongoing	ÚnaG
45.	Support the Connaught Ulster Alliance (IT Sligo LyIT, & GMIT) in the process to become a Technological University	2015-2017	DES, HEA, IT Sligo, LyIT, & GMIT, SFI, EI, Connaught Ulster Alliance
46.	Explore the potential to establish a Business & Innovation Centre (BIC) in the North East along the lines of WestBIC		The Mill (Drogheda Enterprise Hub) with DkIT
47.	Through the INTERREG VA Programme, SEUPB will increase business industry-relevant Research and Innovation capacity across the Region within two sectors; 'Health & Life Sciences' and 'Renewable Energy', with an ERDF allocation of €45m.	2016 - 2023	SEUPB
48.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will promote innovation through educational seminars and its financial supports for new and existing client companies to develop their enterprises within its innovation hubs in Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair agus Fiontarlann Chill Chartha.	Ongoing	Údarás na Gaeltachta

Chapter 9: Attracting and Embedding Foreign Direct Investment

A key objective of the Action Plan for Jobs: Regional strategy is to win new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the regions by using and developing each region's competitive strengths to offer a supportive environment for the growth of those enterprises.

Key ambitions for the North East/ North West in terms of attracting and embedding FDI are to:

- **Attract more investment to the region: Over the next 5 years, IDA is aiming for a 30% to 40% uplift in projects, to a minimum of 61 new Investments to the North East/ North West;**
- **Target new inward investment opportunities by marketing the region as a location for FDI by Global Business Services and High Value Manufacturing;**
- **Drive transformation with existing IDA clients by encouraging them to increase activity and innovation and deliver new mandates to grow and expand their business presence in Ireland;**
- **Develop a value proposition for the North East/ North West aimed at securing potential "second site" investments, i.e. securing a second active site from companies with large scale existing operations in Dublin, building on the success of this model with EBay/PayPal in Dundalk/Blanchardstown;**
- **Construct New Advance Building Solutions in Sligo and Dundalk;**
- **Complete work on the New Office Building in Letterkenny.**

To drive this ambition, IDA will actively promote the North East/ North West to FDI clients, using and developing the region's competitive strengths (social infrastructure, population base, third level educational institutes and property solutions).

IDA will work closely with the existing base of employers to encourage additional investment, particularly in activities such as R&D, customer support and back office functions.

IDA will work in partnership with local and national stakeholders to win investments and jobs from new companies, existing companies and from new areas of opportunity in FDI.

IDA EI and ÚnaG will continue to co-operate at a local level to support FDI and enterprise development, through actions such as networking events for indigenous and FDI client companies and the promotion of regional supply chains to potential FDI clients.

Building on the insurance and technical services cluster and the Fintech cluster in the region, IDA will actively market the North East/ North West as a location for FDI by Global Business Services companies.

IDA will leverage synergies across the manufacturing, engineering and lifesciences clusters in the Region and capitalise on the strong tradition in precision engineering and tool making in the North West to develop a marketing proposition for the North East/ North West in the area of High Value Manufacturing.

This sector-specific global targeting is complementary to, and conducted in conjunction with, IDA's broader activity.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
49.	IDA will target a minimum of 61 new investments for the North East/ North West over the period 2015 – 2019; an increase of 30 to 40% on the strategy for 2010 – 2014.	2015 -2019	IDA Ireland
50.	IDA will continue to collaborate with their existing clients under the Transformation program, encouraging them to invest in new activities, innovation and to win new mandates.	2015 - 2019	IDA Ireland
51.	Plan, develop and construct new Advanced Building Solution in Sligo.	2015 - 2016	IDA Ireland / Local Authority
52.	Plan, develop and construct new Advanced Building Solution in Letterkenny.	2015	IDA Ireland
53.	Plan, develop and construct new Advanced Building Solution in Dundalk.	2017 - 2018	IDA Ireland / Local Authority
54.	Progress plans for accessing the IDA owned Oakfield lands in Sligo to enable new business park to be planned and developed.	2015/2016	IDA Ireland, Local Authorities, NRA
55.	Growing on the successful strategy of providing property solutions, Údarás will continue a building and refurbishment programme to help support the attraction/expansion of Indigenous Investment and FDI in the North East/ North West.	2015-2017	ÚnaG

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
56.	IDA Ireland will proactively update its online marketing “Invest in” series for the North East/ North West.	2015-2016	IDA Ireland
57.	IDA will develop a value proposition for the North East/ North West aimed at securing potential “second site” investments from companies with large scale existing operations in Dublin.	2015-2019	IDA Ireland
58.	Develop further the synergies and scope for collaboration between High Value Manufacturing enterprises across the region to develop a marketing proposition around existing clusters in Life Sciences, Engineering	Ongoing	IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, ÚnaG, IoTs ETBs and Private Sector
59.	Develop a marketing proposition around the employment intensive Global Business Services clusters such as insurance and technical services and Financial Technology (Fintech - Payments).	2015 and ongoing	IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, ÚnaG, IoTs, ETBs and private sector
60.	IDA Executives based overseas will visit relevant companies in the region to enhance their knowledge of the region to market it to potential inward investors.	End 2015	IDA Ireland
61.	Develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities’ enterprise development and job-creation activities and formalise the name of a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan.	2015	Connect Ireland, North East/ North West Local Authorities
62.	Announce and run a Connectivation competition, inviting third level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative	2016	Connect Ireland/ HEIs

Chapter 10: Building Sectoral Opportunities

Sectors of strength which can be built upon in the North East/ North West include Agri-food, Tourism, Marine, Manufacturing, Engineering, Lifesciences, Energy.

Key ambitions for the North East/ North West in this area are:

- **Strengthen the important sectoral clusters in the region: International Business Services and Manufacturing;**
- **Increase the value of agri-food exports by 85% by 2025 by supporting food start-ups to grow and innovate and enhancing the marketing of the region's food and beverage products;**
- **Explore the potential for a Digital payments Cluster along M1 Corridor developing areas of expertise, creation of expanded clusters, building on existing strengths & identifying second site solutions;**
- **Target manufacturing companies in the North East/ North West to scale, innovate and develop international markets;**
- **Explore the potential to develop crafts hubs for the region similar to Drumshambo food hub;**
- **Develop the North-South Electricity Interconnector as a key piece of energy infrastructure which will enable job creation and economic development in the North East/ North West;**
- **Explore potential to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all counties or groups of counties, as appropriate, on both sides of the Border building on the Newry/Mourne/Louth initiative, under such themes as: Renewable Energy and Green Technology; Tourism and Recreation; Sustainable Economic Growth, Job Creation; Emergency Planning.**
- **Capitalise on the Wild Atlantic Way experience in the North West to contribute to the targets in the Government's Tourism Policy Statement to grow overseas tourist numbers to 10 million by 2025 and increase overseas tourism revenue to €5 billion by 2025;**
- **Build on the Ireland's Ancient East brand in the North East to contribute to the target in the Government's new Tourism Policy Statement to grow employment in the sector by 25% to 2025**
- **Establish a cross border historic literary trail building on the Region's literary heritage.**

Food

The strong food sector across the whole of the Region offers potential for further growth, with added value and increased productivity being key opportunity areas.

A new agri-food strategy, Food Wise 2025, has recently been developed for the coming decade. This sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of the agri-food sector to 2025 with a strong focus on maximising the development of the industry in all sectors and geographic areas. Its vision of 'Local Roots Global Reach' is based on the knowledge that this sector is embedded in local rural communities and that the continued efficient production of environmentally-friendly product will drive direct and indirect employment in local areas as well as achieving export growth on global markets.

Food Wise 2025 envisages a growth projection of 23,000 direct jobs in the agri-food sector all along the supply chain, and an increase in the value of agri-food exports by 85% to €19 billion by 2025 if the actions identified in the Report are implemented. Much of this growth will be driven by sectors which are particularly strong in the North East/ North West.

Some developments have taken place in the Region to support the future development of food production and specialised food products; such as the Food Hub in Drumshambo, Co. Leitrim and the development of a Food Centre in St. Angela's College, Sligo.

Fig 7– Drumshambo Food Hub, Co. Leitrim



Food Festivals such as the Taste of Cavan have contributed enormously to raising awareness of the 'food offering' at both local and regional level and such events must be supported to grow and develop.

SMEs and start ups with a potential to upscale will be the driving force behind increased employment levels in the agri-food and agri-tech sector, both nationally and within the North East/ North West. Emerging artisan food producers in the Region include Noodle House Organic Pasta (Sligo), Cannaboe Confectionery (Leitrim) and Corleggy Cheeses (Cavan).

Public and private sector bodies play a key role in supporting food enterprises and start ups in the food and beverage sector in the Region and are the focus of many of the actions in this Plan. For example, the *Food Academy Start* training programme, a collaboration between Bord Bia, the region's Local Enterprise Offices and Supervalu, provides integrated support and training to food

companies as they progress on their journey of growth from start-up to national distribution and export. Teagasc will also work with food enterprises in the North East/ North West to develop food innovation programmes.

Fig 8 – Taste of Cavan 2015



Marine

Killybegs is Ireland's primary national fishing port. Its strategic location along the Atlantic and natural deep water harbour facilities, has enabled it to evolve a state of the art pelagic catching and processing sector. This sector represents Ireland's largest seafood export, both in volume and value terms, with 184, 326 MT of exports worth €219,742,000 in 2014.

The shellfish sector is Ireland's second largest in value terms, with exports worth €170,039,000 in 2014. Highly innovative shellfish processing plants located in the northwest are key employers for the region. Aquaculture is also a vital resource for the BMW region, accounting for over 50% of the 1,833 people employed nationally and deriving €38 million of the national €115 million value, predominantly from salmon and oyster production in 2014.

The key fundamental to achieving further growth for Ireland's seafood sector is capitalising on existing and potential raw materials from both wild and farmed resources and leveraging maximum

value and scaled growth through ensuring the seafood sector has access to rounded applied supports as is outlined in Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025.

To develop this sector further and capitalise on opportunities for growth, BIM and LYIT will further evolve the Killybeg's regional Seafood Development Hub set up in 2011.

Creative Sector

Developing the creative sector opens up valuable opportunities for increasing start ups and employment in the North East/ North West . Building on key creative assets such as:

- **Creative Spark**, established in 2012 to promote creative and cultural industries, including new and emerging businesses and freelance practitioners, provides a dedicated creative training and workspace facility in Dundalk, County Louth. It identifies and applies best practice in supporting all creative endeavour whether for community goals, career advancement for creative practitioners or skills acquisition within the creative sector.
- **Louth Craftmark**, a web-based support platform which showcases the work of talented Louth makers and designers. Louth Craftmark Designers Network is a group of makers and visual artists based in and around County Louth who promote and support its members through accessing funding, networking and collaborative projects. Louth Craftmark Designers Network is an impact driven membership organisation. The creative disciplines of its membership include Ceramics, Print, Jewellery, Textiles, Woodwork, Furniture, Sculpture and Painting.
- From a skills perspective, in the North East, **IT Sligo's BA in Creative Design**, aimed at providing an in depth education in creative design and opportunities to work with companies to develop innovative and technical skills,

offers potential to sustain and grow employment and export potential for the this sector into the future.

A key action in this Plan centres around exploring the potential to establish Creative Hubs in the North East/ North West to enable the creative sector by bringing individuals together in "creative hubs" to promote design skills, help tourism, attract creative people into the region & improve quality of life.

Energy

Ireland has binding EU targets in place to deliver 16% of its overall energy from renewable sources by 2020. Within this overall target, 40% of our electricity will be met from renewables. Longer term predictions are showing that there will be a significant increase in renewable energy deployment in Europe over and above the EU 2020 target levels.

Considerable potential exists for the exploitation of renewable energy generation, particularly wind (including off shore), wave and tidal energy, along the western seaboard. The SEAI in their Ocean Energy Roadmap have indicated that the North West has the potential to harness up to 1.5 GW of tidal energy, this is approximately 50% of Ireland's estimated tidal resource. Significant dividends

can accrue from developing an appropriate renewable energy mix, such as combinations of wind, wave and tidal, to support economic development in the Region.

A key action centres around exploring the potential to develop a Renewable Energy Innovation Centre at Killybegs to maximise the potential of existing natural resources (wind farms, wave power, off shore wind, biomass) which are abundant in the region.

At national level, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) aims to make Ireland a recognised global leader in sustainable energy. It will run a range of programmes and schemes in the North East/ North West to assist businesses, public sector bodies, homeowners and communities to achieve energy savings. As energy is a significant cost for industry, improving energy efficiency within the region will improve the competitiveness of businesses and support job creation.

Also at national level, EirGrid, a state-owned company, is responsible for the consistent and reliable transmission of electricity that homes and businesses in the North East/ North West can rely on. Earlier this year EirGrid published a draft strategy for developing Ireland's national grid. Central to the draft strategy is the provision of a strong and reliable electricity supply to the regions. This will ensure that North East/ North West and the other regions are equipped for investments by both energy intensive indigenous and multinational companies seeking to locate or expand in the region.

Tourism

Tourism will continue to be one of the key sectors in the future economic development of the region and offers significant potential for the creation of new jobs across all counties in the Region.

Fig 9 – Sliabh Liag Cliffs, Donegal



Fig 10 – Ben Bulbin, Co. Sligo

Recent developments such as the proposed reopening of the Ulster Canal between Lough Erne and Clones and the designation of the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark, will significantly raise the profile of the Region, and its potential as a tourist destination. It is a world first for a Geopark to cross an international border, and in light of the recent turbulent history of Ireland, sets a wonderful example of co-operation to the rest of the world. It is important that these flagship projects, are promoted so that multiplier effects can be enjoyed throughout the Region. There is strong potential to develop tourism products, (i.e. cultural tourism) which harness existing linkages across the region with regard to history, geography, economic development, folk traditions, language and musical heritage as well as activity based and marine tourism. Development of Green Tourism Products is another area where the tourism product can be developed in a sustainable manner.

A unique opportunity to market and develop an alternative tourism experience, on both sides of the border, is being developed by Monaghan County Council. The Borderlands Experience, is a concept that seeks to link and market the existing natural heritage and cultural assets of the border counties, north and south from the Mourne in Co. Down to Ben Bulbin in Sligo.

Louth and Meath County Councils have adopted a holistic approach towards the development and marketing of identified themed destinations in Meath and Louth. The “Boyne Valley Destination” is an initiative of Louth and Meath County Councils working together over the past few years to jointly promote the Boyne Valley as a tourism destination. This unique approach, which ignores town or county boundaries, has proved very successful. There has been significant investment in the Boyne Valley in areas of enterprise development, marketing and destination development by Fáilte Ireland in conjunction with the County Councils of both Louth and Meath.

The actions set out in this Plan relate to the development of new tourism offerings and a greater level of ‘packaging’ of the tourism products within the Region to ensure the successful exploitation and capture of particular market segments. The development and marketing of attractions North and South, combined will serve to improve the variety of the tourism product.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Agrifood		
63.	Teagasc will work with other responsible bodies and regional stakeholders to develop food innovation programmes and explore how Teagasc Ballyhaise College can contribute to the creation of a hub for agri-food technology and business process.	Ongoing	Teagasc, Local Authorities, LEDC, EI/LEOs, ÚnaG
64.	Teagasc will deliver product development workshops in the region targeting the development of 20 new food enterprises and will support the development of an artisan food hub pilot project in the region based on international best practice of such hubs.	2016-2017	Teagasc, EI/LEOs, ÚnaG, LEDC, Local Authorities, Bord Bia, DAFM, Failte Ireland,
65.	Build on the success of established food festivals such as the Taste of Cavan to Showcase regional food producers, from artisan to large companies, through various food festivals in the region.	Ongoing	EI/LEOs, Local Authorities, Teagasc, BIM, ÚnaG
66.	To ensure a good quality pipeline of food entrepreneurs, run a pre Food Works clinic in the region in 2017.	2017	Enterprise Ireland, LEOs Bord Bia, Teagasc
67.	Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme and progress a number of companies in the region to the next level - Food Academy Advance.	Ongoing	Bord Bia, EI/LEOs
68.	Bord Bia to work with Retailers to assist food and drink companies in the North East/ North West to increase shelf space for local produce.	Ongoing	Bord Bia
69.	Enterprise Ireland will target food companies in the North East/ North West to scale and innovate in line with National Policy.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
70.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide support for 3 high potential food and drinks companies in the region to expand their operations.	2015 -2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta
71.	Teagasc to continue to support and increase the level of farm diversification in the Region through their Option programme and their pilot <i>Opt-In</i> web portal.	Ongoing	Teagasc
72.	Promote Innovation Vouchers specifically targeting small food companies.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, DAFM, LEOs,
73.	InterTradeIreland will use its Fusion initiative (connecting HEIs in the region/nationally with innovative SMEs) to further develop innovation in agri-technology firms.	2015-2016	ITI
74.	BIM and LYIT to further evolve the Killybeg's regional Seafood Development Hub set up in 2011.	Ongoing	BIM, LyIT, Donegal Co. Co. ÚnaG, Private Sector.
	Creative Industries		
75.	Map creative industries including Digital Content within the region and examine the potential for development of the sector within the Region.	2016	EI/LEOs, ÚnaG, DCCOI, HEIs, Local Authorities,
76.	Develop micro loans & entrepreneur vouchers for development of creative industries via small loans for start-ups, micro business.	2015-2016	WDC, MicroFinance Ireland, 6 County Enterprise Fund
77.	Explore the potential to develop crafts hubs for the region similar to Drumshambo food hub. Enable the creative sector by bringing individuals together in "creative hubs" to promote design skills, help tourism, attract creative people into the region & improve	2016-2017	Local Authorities, ÚnaG, DAHG, DCCOI, WDC, HEIs

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	quality of life.		
	ICT Sector		
78.	IDA and EI will work with industry to explore the potential for a Digital payments Cluster along M1 Corridor developing areas of expertise, creation of expanded clusters, building on existing strengths & identifying second site solutions.	2016	IDA, Enterprise Ireland, DkIT, DCU, Local Authorities, in collaboration with enterprise within the region
	Energy / Renewables		
79.	Explore potential to develop a Renewable Energy Innovation Centre at Killybegs to maximise the potential of existing natural resources (wind farms, wave power, off shore wind, biomass) which are abundant in the region.	Ongoing	LyIT, SEAI, DCENR, Industry, EI, ÚnaG, LEO Donegal, Local Authorities, Coillte
80.	Identify opportunities in Green Energy and on a cross border basis to encourage a low carbon environment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further development of cross border and international partnerships to support the development of sustainable technologies - Provision of R & D support - Provision of access to specialised equipment & facilities (on a cross border basis) - Provision of workshops, training and mentor support. 	2016-2017	SEAI, Local Authorities, other relevant stakeholders in the region Cavan Innovation and Technology Centre
81.	Western Development Commission to develop a micro loan fund for renewable energy.	2016	Western Development Commission
82.	Each local authority will adopt the principles of the guidelines for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES) when reviewing their County Development Plans and collectively examine the potential for	2015-2017	Local Authorities, SEAI

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Regional Renewable Energy strategies.		
83.	Complete a regional renewable energy analysis on the use of biomass as a local contribution to the national renewable heat target and develop a range of actions to support the development of renewable energy in the region.	Ongoing	Western Development Commission, SEAI
84.	Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region.	Ongoing	SEAI in partnership with North East/ North West local authorities, ÚnaG
85.	Work with SEAI to develop and promote Sustainable Energy Communities model in the region and identify willing early adopter communities to act as exemplars.	2015 – 2017	North East/ North West local authorities, SEAI, ÚnaG
86.	Ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the North East/ North West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries that rely on large energy consumption	Ongoing	Eirgrid
87.	Develop the North-South Electricity Interconnector as a key piece of energy infrastructure which will enable job creation and economic development in the North East/ North West.	2019	Eirgrid
	Retail		
88.	<p>Local authorities and Retail Groups to develop collaborations to support the regeneration and development of their towns through town centre strategic development plans.</p> <p>Develop measures in conjunction with property owners and investors to address derelict properties.</p> <p>Provide support and assistance to pop up shops and markets in principal towns of the region enabling artisan food producers, artists and craft makers to showcase and sell their products.</p>	2016-2017	Local Authorities, DECLG, Chambers, Retail Bodies, Local Businesses,

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
89.	The Local Authorities will develop Business Incentive Schemes (e.g. Rates Incentive Scheme, Development Levies Scheme) to support retail and attract business into town centres.	2016	Local Authorities, Local Businesses,
90.	Collaborate to examine ways to revive and reinvigorate retailing at County and Regional level.	2016	Local Authorities, Chambers, Retail Bodies, Local Businesses,
	MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING and TOOL MAKING		
91.	Pursue the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Toolmaking & Design as a training centre.	2016-2017	IT Sligo, ETB, ÚnaG, Sectoral cluster of employers,
92.	Explore the potential for adding value to forestry raw materials for job creation Expand the potential for training local harvesters & manufacturers of wood related products.	2016-2017	Local Authorities, Coillte, Private Sector,
93.	Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing companies in the North East/ North West to scale, innovate and develop international markets.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland
94.	In the context of the Ibec Manufacturing survey, host a series of regional seminars in association with AIB including one in the North West	2015-2017	Ibec, AIB
	Tourism		
95.	Fáilte Ireland will examine, as part of the Wild Atlantic Way strategy for 2015-2019, the development of a series of loops off the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East to encourage greater spread of visitors, alleviate pressure from high traffic areas and present complementary visitor experiences.	2016-2017	Fáilte Ireland
96.	Provide a suite of business supports to high potential tourism groups and businesses in the region to build capability and capacity in the tourism sector.	2016-2019	Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities with relevant local groups , ÚnaG

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
97.	Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to market the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Lakelands Region as a tourism destination and Failte Ireland to identify any gaps in the Tourism Sector in the Region.	2016-2019	Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland , ÚnaG Local Authorities, Networks, Industry
98.	Promote the Wild Atlantic Way as a destination of choice for adventure sports and outdoor recreational activities.	2016-2019	Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland , Waterways Ireland, Local Authorities
99.	Develop a Blueway in Leitrim.	2016-2017	Leitrim Co Co, Waterways Ireland
100.	Support the development and expansion of the Blueway network in the central area of the region through collaboration and co-operation of the relevant stakeholders enabling the region develop its potential as a premier base for water sports and a 'go-to' destination for water based recreational activity in Ireland	2016-2017	Cavan Co Co, Waterways Ireland,
101.	Support further development and promotion of Cavan Burren Geopark as a key cross border and North East/ North West tourist attraction	2016-2017	Cavan Co Council Coillte, Marble Caves Global Geopark, Local Community
102.	Develop the potential of 'inland' water based activities and tourism in the central area of the Region, particularly in the areas of fishing/angling, canoeing, kayaking. Promote cross border tourism projects in this area having regard to the potential afforded by the Shannon Erne Waterway.	Ongoing	Inland Waterways, Local Authorities, Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland
103.	Support the reopening and development of the Ulster Canal and enhance the visitor attraction potential of Castle Saunderson to compliment redevelopment of the canal	2016-2017	Waterways Ireland Failte Ireland, Coillte Fermanagh District Council , Monaghan and Cavan Local Authorities
104.	Implement development plan to upgrade facilities for Killykeen Forest Park to enable it realise its full potential as a key Forest Park		Cavan Co Council, Coillte

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	and outdoor recreational amenity within the Region		
105.	Develop tourism related maritime projects such as sailing/ yachting / cruise ships in the north west (Killybegs) of the region.	Ongoing	Donegal Co. Co., DAFM, Ports Authority, ÚnaG, LyIT.
106.	Develop tourism related maritime projects such as sailing/ cruise ships/ festivals in the Drogheda / North East region.	Ongoing	Louth County Council, Drogheda Port Company
107.	<p>Sligo Co Co to develop proposals for the following projects and submit application to Failte Ireland for consideration under its Capital Funding programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the potential of a Surfing Centre of Excellence to be located at the proposed Maritime Centre, Strandhill . • Establish a Spanish Armada Interpretive Centre. • Build on the Region's cultural heritage through the development of a visitor centre dedicated to WB Yeats. • Explore potential to establish a Mountain biking centre on Ox mountains (circa 3500 acres of Coillte land available). 	2016	Sligo Co Co.
108.	Identify and develop greenway / blueway networks in the Region.	Ongoing	Local Authorities, Waterways Ireland, ÚnaG
109.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will provide a capacity building programme in tourism related	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	enterprises.		
110.	Promote and raise awareness of Failte Ireland's new international accreditation for alternative accommodation ('Welcome Standard') among providers of, or those interested in developing, non-mainstream accommodation options in the region.	Ongoing	Failte Ireland EI/ LEOs and Local Authorities
	Cross Border Initiatives		
111.	Explore potential to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all counties or groups of counties as appropriate on both sides of the Border as per Newry/Mourne/Louth initiative, under such themes as: Renewable Energy and Green Technology; Tourism and Recreation; Sustainable Economic Growth, Job Creation; Emergency Planning.	2016-2017	North East/ North West Local Authorities in collaboration with cross border counterparts, Chambers of Commerce
112.	Develop cross border Activity Tourism.	Ongoing	North East/ North West Local Authorities in collaboration with cross border counterparts
113.	Launch the Shannon-Erne Waterway Blueway as a recreational trail concept to include walking, heritage & food.	2017	Waterways Ireland, Local Authorities, Failte Ireland
114.	Advance East-west greenway corridor from Larne to Sligo and north to Derry/Letterkenny, via Ulster Canal, Sligo-Enniskillen Railway in line with strategic routes developed by Dept of Agriculture and Regional Development NI.	2016-2017	Local Authorities, with cross border counterparts
115.	Establish a cross border historic literary trail building on the North East/ North West region's literary heritage (including Yeats, McGahern, Kavanagh, Heaney, Mc Gill and Friel)	2017	Local Authorities in collaboration with cross border counterparts

Chapter 11: Skills Enhancement and Labour Market Activation

Consultations with stakeholders highlighted the importance of matching skills supply and demand within the region. Another key priority voiced by stakeholders during the consultation on this Action Plan was the need for enhanced engagement between education providers and enterprise to ensure that graduates emerging from all levels of our education system are "workplace ready" and have an appreciation of entrepreneurship as a career option.

Ambitions for the North East/ North West in this area are to:

- **Foster better engagement between education providers and employers in the region to deliver the skills needs of the region, through initiatives such as Regional Skills Fora and enterprises working with the higher education sector to help shape curricula;**
- **Ensure that the North East/ North West has a strong supply of talent, as well as sustainable pipelines of graduates in the STEM disciplines to support enterprises in the region to grow and scale;**
- **Strengthen the capacity for entrepreneurship in the region;**
- **Provide young students with the necessary information about career opportunities in the region to help them make informed choices about career planning and provide opportunities to enable them to continue to live and work in their local communities;**
- **Provide one-to-one support to DSP's long term unemployed clients to assist them in accessing employment or training.**

Significant reforms are underway in the education sector, aimed at ensuring the availability of high quality skills at all levels and encouraging and facilitating deeper engagement between enterprises and the education system. Key elements of these reforms include:

- The development of higher education clusters to better serve the needs of regions
- Through the development, supported by SOLAS, of a Further Education and Training sector that is more responsive to the needs of learners and employers, the four Education and Training Boards in the North East/ North West will play a key role in the development of entry and intermediate level skills for the workforce in the region, including development of new apprenticeships and traineeships
- The establishment of a network of Regional Skills Fora to promote greater engagement between publicly funded education and training providers, employers and other key stakeholders in building skills within a region

In response to the views expressed through the APJ consultation process and in order to best support the employer base across the region, a decision has already been taken to establish a Regional Skills Forum in the North East and a Regional Skills Forum in the North West.

Serving counties Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim, Donegal ETB, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB, IT Sligo and St Angela's College, and Skillnets have come together with the enterprise agencies, employer representatives and other key local stakeholders to form the North West Skills Forum. The Forum will be chaired by a leading services employer in the North West. Following an initial assessment of skills needs, a cross agency plan is being put in place to address specific requirements for trained chefs and welders for the metal fabrication industry.

Building on successful collaborative relationships and alliances already in place such as the North East Further and Higher Education Alliance and the Louth and Cavan Economic Fora, the North East Skills Forum will focus on building the supply of skills to support job creation and expansion in counties Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. The membership of the North East Skills Forum will include Dundalk Institute of Technology, Cavan/ Monaghan ETB, Louth/Meath ETB, Skillnets, employers and other key public bodies, including the enterprise development agencies. The North East Skills Forum will be chaired by a leading manufacturing employer in the North East.

The network of Regional Skills Fora will provide a framework for the education providers and key enterprise stakeholders to work together in identifying and addressing the skills needs of each region. This includes developing a collective understanding of the labour market and the enterprise profile of the region, in order to inform programme development and ensure that provision is aligned with emerging needs. The fora will also focus on helping employers better understand the full spectrum of education programmes and services available in the region and how to access them and provide a framework for employers to more proactively promote the wide range of career options and roles available across the region. Dedicated funding is being provided by the Department of Education and Skills to support the establishment and development of the network in 2016.

In the North East, PayPal is chairing and working with the Louth Economic Forum's Education and Training Committee to enhance skills and talent in the North East.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

At primary and second level, the important role of education in promoting an entrepreneurial mindset is now widely recognised. A key objective of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship is to support the development of entrepreneurship in the education system and a new policy on Entrepreneurship in Education is also being developed. One of the principles in the new Framework for Junior Cycle is also "innovation and creativity" and one of the statements of learning which each student should experience involves "taking initiative, being innovative and developing entrepreneurial skills".

Encouraging and promoting an enterprise culture among the student population is an important area of activity for the Local Enterprise Offices. Nationally, over 20,000 students a year will

participate in the various LEO supported programmes implemented in the education sector at both primary and secondary level including:

- Student Enterprise Awards - Second Level;
- Exploring Enterprise - Second Level;
- Bi Gnothach Enterprise Programme - Primary Level.
- Junior Achievement - ÚnaG

In addition, students in Transition Year normally have work experience opportunities included in their programmes.

Promoting Career Options within the North East/ North West

IoT, LEOs, Údarás na Gaeltachta and enterprise will work together to inform and encourage second level students of the range of opportunities and careers within the region's SMEs and MNCs, in order to help meet future skills needs in enterprises within the region, as well as providing opportunities for young people to continue to live and work in their local communities.

Labour Market Activation

Unemployment in the North East/ North West currently (Q3 2015) stands at 9.3%. A key priority for the Government is to support persons who are unemployed to get back into the workforce. Alongside the measures in the national and Regional Action Plans for Jobs to help create new employment opportunities, the following actions will be taken:

- The Department of Social Protection, through its Intreo Centres, Local Branch Office Network and through its newly appointed Jobpath providers, will provide support for both Jobseekers and Employers, including benefits entitlements, advice on training options and assistance in securing employment/employees.
- Enterprise Ireland and IDA will collaborate with DSP by promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst their client companies

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
	Addressing Skills Needs		
116.	Establish the North West and North East Regional Skills Fora to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders, on an ongoing basis, to collaborate in building the skills of the region.	2015 and ongoing	DES, IoT, ETBs, Skillnets IDA, EI, LEOs, Ibec Chambers, industry/SMEs relevant public bodies.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
117.	HEIs to collaborate with Industry to raise awareness of career opportunities, to 3 rd Level students and explore potential for cross border collaboration.	Ongoing	IoTs, Industry, Chambers, SFA, Ibec, ÚnaG, Enterprise,
118.	Improve communication between public bodies & employers in relation to recruitment services to support the link between employers and people who are job seeking to see posts filled more quickly.	Ongoing	DSP, Local Authorities, ETBs, Employers groups
119.	Develop professional precision engineering toolmaking training programmes in collaboration with employers and I.T.s	2016-2017	IoTs - ETB, Sectoral cluster of employers
120.	Meet the skills shortages in process technician roles in Medtech, Plastics and Engineering sector in the North East/ North West by providing training conversion programmes at level 6.		IMDA Skillnet, Ibec
121.	Continue to host HR forums through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members	Ongoing	Ibec
122.	Develop and roll out new range of national apprenticeship programmes.	2015 and ongoing	ETBs, IoTs, Education & Skills Providers, EI, IDA , ÚnaG
123.	The Local Enterprise Offices will collaborate with Skillnets and other relevant training bodies to ensure a streamlined approach to training offerings in the region.	Ongoing	LEOs, Local authorities, EI, ÚnaG, Skillnets and Training providers in region
124.	Provide skills training and upskilling initiatives for farmers in accounting services, health & safety.	Ongoing	Teagasc
	Developing the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem		
125.	Continue to develop "entrepreneurship in education" learning outcomes in courses at 3 RD Level institutions in the Region.	2016-2017	HEIs

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
126.	Schools, HEIs and companies to collaborate on regional competition for entrepreneurs.	2016	Schools, HEIs, Local Businesses, EI/LEOs
127.	Exploit proximity to Border by developing greater cooperation with NI & Scotland e.g. matching suppliers & talent.	Ongoing	ITI, Local Authorities, Regional Authorities, I.T. Sligo & Letterkenny IT, ÚnaG, EI/LEOs,
	Creating awareness of Career Choices and Opportunities within the region		
128.	Influence career choices at young age through presenting to young students, parents, career guidance teachers , and the wider educational community to inform second level students of opportunities and careers within companies in the North East/ North West.	2017	IoT's, EI/LEOs, ÚnaG, Companies
	Labour Market Activation		
129.	The Dept. of Social Protection will collaborate with stakeholders such as Enterprise Ireland and IDA in promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst client companies.	Ongoing	Department of Social Protection IDA, Enterprise Ireland, ÚnaG, LEOs, ETBs.
130.	Develop cross border higher education Networks (Letterkenny/Derry and Dundalk /Belfast) to facilitate movement of talent, to capitalise on broader job creation opportunities and to support access to third level education and training to enhance enterprise and economic development throughout the region.	2016-2017	LYIT, DkIT working with relevant bodies in Northern Ireland
131.	Enterprise Ireland will promote the newly launched Graduate Placement Programme through their North East/ North West regional offices.	Ongoing	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta
132.	Údarás na Gaeltachta will develop and host 6 educational seminars (2 per annum) for business people along with networking events in the region.	2015-2017	Údarás na Gaeltachta

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
133.	Provide one to one support to long term unemployed clients before they approach employment or training.	Ongoing	DSP, ETBs

Chapter 12: Building Business Networks

Making connections is an essential part of doing business, to support companies in learning from each other, exchanging information and mentoring support and in deepening business to business and business to public sector collaboration.

Cross-regional and cross border networks offer further opportunities to develop networking and collaboration between regions and provide enterprise with a wider knowledge and client support base.

The key ambitions for the North East/ North West in Building Business Networks are to:

- **Build strong enterprise networks to support enterprise within the region to maximise peer to peer learning and create the collaboration needed for the region to fulfil its potential:**
- **Build on the collaborative approach used to support development of this Action Plan to deepen linkages across the public sector bodies in the region and support a cohesive effort to drive the enterprise and jobs agenda within the North East/ North West.**

Chambers of Commerce will provide support to enterprises and work to create an improved business environment for both new and existing businesses. At a regional level, they will provide networking opportunities and business information events and work with key influencers and decision-makers on behalf of their members on issues that are impacting on their businesses.

In addition to Ibec's national remit, Ibec works at regional level to develop local engagement between business communities and public bodies to enhance the business environment and build business networks. Ibec's regional network, will hold conferences, member fora, HR fora, training programmes, networking and briefing events at both regional and sectoral level.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
134.	EI and IDA will work together to develop and implement an information/networking event across the region for EI and IDA clients.	2016	IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland
135.	Develop/ strengthen the existing Chambers to provide a cohesive approach to business support and development across the region	Ongoing	Chambers
136.	Continue to operate Ibec sector specific regional networks	Ongoing	Ibec

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
137.	Hold a Regional Business Roadshow on a topic of relevance to business. Ibec will also host a Regional Business Summit for Ibec members	2016	Ibec
138.	Continue to host HR fora through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members	Ongoing	Ibec
139.	Establish and maintain a database of enterprise networks across the North East/ North West	2016	ITI, LEOs
140.	Develop a platform for exchanging information between businesses	2017	EI/LEOs, Enterprise Centres, IDA, ÚnaG, Business Networks, Chambers
141.	Develop peer to peer mentoring / networking programmes for businesses in sectors to help them overcome barriers to expansion	2017	Local Authorities, EI /LEOs, Business Groups
142.	Organise a Regional Student Enterprise Network to support Student Entrepreneurship.	2016-2017	HEIs, local authorities ÚnaG,
143.	Organise six-monthly meetings of all relevant public bodies within the region to share information on plans, programmes, activities to provide a co-ordinated support to industry in the area.	2016-2017	Members of PDT
144.	Improve first stop shop linking businesses with communities etc	2016-2017	Local Authorities, EI/LEOs, ÚnaG Chambers, LEADER

Chapter 13: Marketing the Region as an Attractive Place to Work and Live

The North East/ North West, with its rich tourism, cultural and heritage assets, along with the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of the people in the region, together with access to third level institutions and lifelong learning opportunities, offers an attractive environment for investors, tourists and potential residents to the region.

The region is well recognised in terms of its attractive environment, with Letterkenny winning the 2015 Tidy Towns Competition, Sligo winning the Purple Flag award in 2015 – the ‘gold standard’ for night time destinations, the spectacular Lakelands in Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan and the Boyne Valley World Heritage site in Louth.

The key objectives for the North East/ North West in marketing the region as an attractive place to work and live are to:

- **Maximise the impact of regional investment programme to attract new investment and jobs to the region;**
- **Drive collaborative initiatives to enhance the attractiveness of the region and showcase the investment and quality of life opportunities available, in order to attract investors, talent and visitors to the region.**

A continued focus on the promotion of the region, based on its established and emerging strengths, would enhance knowledge of the unique strengths and assets of the region, which can be used by businesses and public bodies within the region, as well as by visitors and diaspora, to sell the region and spread the word about what the North East/ North West has to offer in terms of business opportunities, talent, lifestyle and visitor experience.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the local authorities have an important and wide ranging remit in relation to enhancing the business environment in the region. The NWRA, in conjunction with the local authorities and public bodies across the region, is responsible for implementing regional investment programmes which will further enhance the attractiveness of the region, including the attractiveness of towns and cities. In addition, the NWRA continues to manage EU ERDF funding for key strategic projects in the region as well as leveraging new sources for projects of importance such as in relation to regional airports.

A series of actions, as set out below, will be taken by the Regional Assembly, the local authorities and Údarás na Gaeltachta, working in collaboration with enterprise agencies and Regional Chambers and other stakeholders across the region, to attract new investment and jobs to the North East/ North West to support place-making and marketing of the region through their many activities around amenity, environment and economic and community development.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
145.	Develop a Marketing Strategy / Integrated Awareness Campaign (internal & external) to promote the whole of the North East/ North West as a great place to live, work & play. (Look West Model) identifying the unique selling points of the region.	Ongoing	Local Authorities, Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Private Businesses, LEOs, IDA, EI, ÚnaG, Connect Ireland, Local Authorities
146.	Develop an events plan for the North East/ North West showcasing what the Region has to offer (Food, drink, entertainment, business, tourism).	2016	Local Authorities, Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, ÚnaG, Local Service Providers,
147.	Working with the Regional Airports, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will undertake work across a range of areas to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these airports funded by the EU's SPARA2020 (Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports Project..	2015 - 2018	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Donegal Airport Ireland West Knock Airport,
148.	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to explore possibilities for EU funding for relevant projects in the region. The Assembly also acts as the national contact point for three EU Interreg Programmes for the 2014-2020 period i.e. Northern Periphery and Arctic (€56 m), Atlantic Area (€140m) and Interreg Europe (€359 m – jointly with the Southern Assembly).	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly
149.	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to manage the ERDF Gateway Fund which can provide potential investment in the economic, social and cultural infrastructure of the Gateway Towns of Letterkenny, Dundalk and Sligo.	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Local Authorities, relevant State Agencies and Government Departments
150.	The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will continue to lead the implementation of the €320 million Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 in collaboration with relevant public bodies.	Ongoing	Northern and Western Regional Assembly

	Action	Timeline	Responsible bodies
151.	Leitrim County Council and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly will develop a three year strategic project to develop and market a cluster of slow tourism adventure SMEs in Leitrim and potentially the wider region funded under the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme.	2015 -2018	Leitrim County Council Northern and Western Regional Assembly
152.	Secure resources through LEADER/REDZ/ Village and Town Renewal Schemes to invest in towns and villages in the region to enhance their attractiveness as leisure and retail destinations.,	2015-2020	North East/ North West Local Authorities, Department of Environment and Local Government, Programme Management Bodies

Chapter 14: Potential Strategic Areas for Further Job Creation

Potential strategic areas for further job creation

Agriculture and Agri-Food Programme Provision at Dundalk Institute of Technology

The Agriculture and Food sector is of particular strategic importance to the North East/ North West with the sector making the largest contribution to agency-supported employment in the Region, employing almost 8,000 people. This does not include the large number of people directly involved in agricultural production and related locally traded businesses.

A new agri-food strategy, *Food Wise 2025*, has recently been developed for the coming decade. This sets out a cohesive, strategic plan for the development of the agri-food sector to 2025 with a strong focus on maximising the development of the industry in all sectors and geographic areas. Its vision of 'Local Roots Global Reach' is based on the knowledge that this sector is embedded in local rural communities and that the continued efficient production of environmentally-friendly product will drive direct and indirect employment in local areas as well as achieving export growth on global markets. *Food Wise 2025* envisages a growth projection of 23,000 direct jobs in the agri-food sector nationally all along the supply chain if the actions identified in the Report are implemented.

Agriculture Programmes at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) facilitate the transformation to economically competitive and sustainable farm production technologies and systems, securing the long-term future of the Agriculture sector in Ireland. Graduates contribute to the Agriculture and Agri-Food business sectors as well as being capable of developing smaller scale innovative rural enterprises.

DkIT's vision is that the Institute would like to continue a suite of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level including research in the Sustainable Agriculture and Food area. It strives to be a region centre of excellence in the Agri-food area and in collaboration with Teagasc Ballyhaise Agricultural College provide progression opportunities for all students in the North East area thus contributing to the economic development of the Region.

DkIT would like to develop a 4 year programme in Agri Food Science. The proposed new programme would consolidate their experience in both the Agriculture and Food Science areas and also build on skills requirements identified in a number of recent national reports and strategy documents. These will be Food Science graduates who can support the extensive Agri-Food industry in the region.

Digital Payments Cluster

The new strategy for the International Financial Services sector, IFS 2020, has recently been published and sets out a new vision and strategy for Ireland's international financial services (IFS) sector, including a suite of specific actions to drive continued growth and job creation in the sector. Its vision is for Ireland to be the recognised global location of choice for specialist international financial services, building on the strengths in talent, technology, innovation and excellent client service, while focusing on capturing new opportunities in a changing marketplace and embracing the highest standards of governance. The strategy sets an ambitious target to grow the level of direct employment in the IFS sector from its current level of 35,000 to at least 45,000 people by 2020, requiring the creation of a net total of 10,000 new jobs.

FinTech is defined as the application of new technology in financial services to drive innovation and disruptive business models. The M1 Corridor currently hosts a cluster of FinTech /Payments companies to include PayPal, E-Bay, State Street, Vesta Payment Solutions and Yapstone (Digital Payments Cluster). While some of these companies are directly engaged in innovation and R&D activities, there is a growing demand to support agile short-cycle innovation projects on a regional basis.

Traditional financial services activities are now rapidly being complemented by the expanding payments industry, with increasing levels of non-bank financing, a shift to electronic and mobile payments and a greater focus on technology.

Drogheda Enterprise Centre Limited (The Mill) supported by Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) are proposing to capitalise on the opportunities presented and to address challenges by developing a Digital Payments Cluster in the North East at the Mill, as the hub for the cluster.

There is currently a critical mass of companies in this region with the potential to scale and grow such a cluster. The cluster would be a magnet for other FDI / Indigenous companies. Within the North East and M1 Corridor, companies have access to the skills and expertise within the HEI sector to include Dundalk Institute of Technology as well as DCU through the strategic alliance between the two HEIs. Given the region's proximity to the border, major opportunities also exist to facilitate and significantly support the development of the digital payments cluster by deepening and widening this supply chain across the M1 Corridor.

Drogheda Enterprise Centre Limited and DkIT are proposing to undertake an action/business plan for this cluster with the following remit:

1. To identify the best way in which the region can support the emergence of a digital payments cluster.
2. To outline the range of enterprise development and R&D programmes to support the cluster's development and to identify how these will be resourced to best support the development of the cluster.

3. To explore national and international marketing initiatives for the development of the cluster and to market the cluster.
4. To develop a business/implementation plan for the realisation of the project.

Digital Content Sector

The Digital Content Sector will continue to grow between now and the end of the decade with the games and online content sub-sectors most likely to grow most rapidly nationally, with average annual employment growth of 5% before the end of the decade possible³. In this context, it would be sensible to plan for a more connected, dynamic and sustainable digital content sector for the North East/ North West, with up to 1,000 employed fulltime in the sector by the end of the decade. The overall aim is ultimately to contribute towards building skills, networks, market broadening and innovation in the sector, thereby facilitating the development of sustainable clusters in the region.

The development of a 'regional eco-system' of infrastructure and other supports to aid the development of the Digital Content Sector in the Region is proposed. Dundalk, Letterkenny and Sligo, the NSS Gateways in the Region would serve as the hubs for the eco-system, and more importantly for the growth of the sector, they have emerging clusters in the sector along with well-established and growing higher education and specialist research capacities. These hubs are also seeking to connect with their cross-border counterparts, and one may envisage a system of three principal cross-border hubs in the form of Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry, Dundalk-Newry and Sligo-Enniskillen-Omagh.

The eco-system would include a county-level or local ecosystem in which the existing enterprise centres and incubation units would be connected to support digital content and other economic activities through attractive workspaces, high-speed broadband and networks of mentors. These county-level networks would be supported through their respective local authorities via the implementation of the statutory 6-year LECs.

The regional network or eco-system sitting above the county networks would then aim to provide further, complementary supports to entrepreneurs and businesses in the local eco-systems, such as training, skills development and networking designed to facilitate broadening market access, exporting and innovation. The regional network or eco-system sitting above the county networks would then aim to provide further, complementary supports to entrepreneurs and businesses in the local eco-systems, such as training, skills development and networking designed to facilitate broadening market access, exporting and innovation.

The drivers of the eco-system at local level within each of the counties would be the local authorities who would act to ensure high-speed broadband, workspaces, mentoring and information regarding funding and other supports. The hubs at regional level would be driven by the Institutes of Technology at Dundalk, Sligo and Letterkenny, and would facilitate training and professional development, further networking and innovation, as well as ensuring that their graduates provide a quality workforce for employers.

DkIT would have an overall coordinating role in the process, through maintaining and disseminating intelligence on the sector within the Region through surveys and other relevant data, events coordination and helping to identify and coordinate EU funding opportunities for enterprises.

³ PMCA Foresight Report on the Digital Content Sector in Ireland and the Irish Border Counties

Centre for seafood Innovation and Research, in Killybegs

The Action Plan for Jobs 2015, identified enormous seafood product opportunities along with those in the marine technology and biotech sectors.

BIM's Strategy Document 2013-2017 'Capturing Ireland's Share of the Global Seafood Opportunity' included a key action to: "Establish formal strategic alliances with University College Cork and Letterkenny Institute of Technology to create stronger industry links to the third level sector including access to relevant graduates and the development of innovation clusters around the seafood sector." This action feeds directly into plans for the Killybegs Marine Innovation Centre and the development of Killybegs as Ireland's Ocean Wealth hub and gateway.

Killybegs has a robust fisheries / food sector that is constantly innovating and adding value to products and services. One of the most striking of these developments is turning a waste product, that had associated disposal costs, into a market product that is now increasing profit for the relevant company involved. This innovation was a result of 18 months of research and development (R&D) at a private company level. This type of R&D would be a significant part of the Marine Innovation Centre in Killybegs and would have a high level of impact on job creation and value added product.

The primary aim of the Centre for seafood Innovation and Research, to be located in Killybegs, is to facilitate and accelerate the commercialisation of innovative food product development proposals, aimed at maximising the value-added and employment opportunities offered primarily, but not exclusively, by the fishing industry.

An important part of the Killybegs innovation centre would be the provision of 'wet' as opposed to 'dry' laboratories'. This would create the opportunity to include facilities for food testing for the private sector some of which must be sent to Europe as the relevant tests are not available in Ireland. This would not only serve to facilitate local companies but also provide a local service provision to food production companies nationwide.

Development of green energy

Ireland has binding EU targets in place to deliver 16% of its overall energy from renewable sources by 2020. Within this overall target, 40% of our electricity will be met from renewables. The Government plans to double the value of Ireland's ocean wealth to 2.4% of GDP by 2030 and increase the turnover from our ocean economy to exceed €6.4 billion by 2020. The plan for the sector, 'Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth - An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland' presents a roadmap for the Government's vision to tap into a €1.2 trillion global market for seafood, tourism, renewable ocean energy and new applications for health, medicine and technology.

Killybegs is a port of national strategic importance and has been described as the gateway to our ocean wealth on the west coast. The development of a centre of marine excellence in the North-West has been in careful and deliberate development over the past number of years through public consultation engagement, cross border communications and collaboration, local authority driven initiatives to market and promote the skills and attributes of the long established fishing industry in Killybegs and the diversification of skills expertise and experience in the area.

The centre will have a strategic focus on developing National, European and International opportunities within the following Green / Blue Energy sectors:

1. Tidal Energy and Energy Storage – Ocean Energy
2. Biomass Supply Chain Development
3. Renewable Energy – Applied Research, Education and Training, Community Dividend.

The SEAI in their Ocean Energy Roadmap have indicated that the North West has the potential to harness up to 1.5 GW of tidal energy, this is approximately 50% of Ireland's estimated tidal resource and a secure and independent energy supply to support a growing and thriving economy.

The Marine and Renewables Innovation Centre will contribute to our commitments for cross border cooperation and will enhance the North West's standing in the development of the green economy, by bringing together Queens University and LYIT in the higher education sector on the island of Ireland, it will see international industrial collaboration with potential tidal device companies and energy storage expertise and International academic collaboration.

Investing in the Marine and Renewables Innovation Centre is an investment in our common future and will specifically address;

- Investment in the North West, a peripheral region of Europe.
- Increase the value of Green Exports
- Provide a gateway to our ocean wealth
- Be an enabler/facilitator for tidal demonstration projects for Europe
- Provide a focus for innovation, community and enterprise in the Green/Blue Economy.

The Innovation centre will support industry / academic collaborations to maximise their opportunity to commercialise the outputs from their R&D. It will provide a base and a gateway to Ireland's ocean wealth, specifically to develop tidal energy deployment and development. In addition, it will support and facilitate the oil and gas industry and the wave energy deployments on the West Coast. The

centre will therefore provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure that this happens effectively and efficiently.

The proposal is for the development of an iconic building on a suitable site within the Killybegs campus of LYIT. The building will encompass best practice in sustainable technologies and will reflect the marine heritage of the Killybegs region. It is envisaged that the building will be approximately 2,000sqm and would be modelled on a resource efficiency demonstration site.

Chapter 15: Implementing the Plan and Monitoring Progress

The Action Plans for Jobs for the North East/ North West has been developed following wide local stakeholder engagement, using a “bottom-up” approach, with actions coming from regional stakeholders including the private sector.

The Action Plan covers a three-year timeframe, 2015-2017, to allow for the process to take hold and develop, and to capture a more medium-term ambition for the regions. The Plan will be flexible and dynamic to allow additional actions and ideas to be added as they emerge over the period of the Plan.

Progress on the actions will be monitored on a 6 monthly basis by an Implementation Committee, and Progress Reports on the implementation of the Plan will be published twice each year. The Progress Reports will also identify areas for further action in a rolling framework.

All of the key regional stakeholders who have actions for delivery in the Action Plan will be involved on the Implementation Committee and will be asked to provide updates on the delivery of actions.

Given that strong business representation is also required to drive the enterprise and jobs focus of the Plan, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will appoint locally-based Enterprise Champions to participate on the Implementation Committee and work with the public bodies on the implementation of the Plan.

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will also appoint the Chair of the Implementation Committee.

Notwithstanding the need for local buy-in and ownership of this Action Plan, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and innovation will continue to oversee the Plan at political level and facilitate updates to the Plan through membership of the Implementation Committee.

Processes put in place to monitor this regional Action Plan should complement other monitoring arrangements in the Local Government sphere.

APPENDIX A Research and Technology Centres

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

CoLab at the North West Regional Science Park is LYIT's incubation, research and innovation centre. It is the key dimension within LYIT's commitment to supporting the growth of a regional innovation ecosystem in the North West. CoLab is currently home to 35 high-growth, technology-based, internationally trading enterprises, employing 130 people. LYIT's postgraduate researchers and research centres are also located here, where there is a focus on researching subjects of regional industry importance and on significant technological applications like wireless sensors. LYIT is also exploring emerging new research areas in life sciences, computer security and marine resources.

The North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP) project resulted in a doubling in size of the existing CoLab facility, and opened for business in summer 2015. LYIT and CoLab are proud to be the partners with Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) in this cross-border project which involves bringing the world renowned NISP brand, operating model and support programmes to the North West region, and represents the first step in future strategic cross-border partnerships.

www.co-lab.ie

The **WiSAR Lab** is an Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateway based in the Letterkenny Institute of Technology. The focus of the Lab is on Wireless Sensor Networks, and in particular Body Area Networks with an emphasis on evaluating and minimising the power consumption of the used devices. The WiSAR Lab is industry focused, with over 60 collaborations that includes feasibility studies, RF testing, hardware design and full prototype development.

Letterkenny IT opened its **Wind Energy Centre** in 2011 which is the first step in the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Renewable Technology. The centre operates closely with leaders in the Wind Energy Sector enabling its students to secure placements as part of their programme. The centre has collaborated with St. Lawrence College, Ontario, Canada, and companies such as Safety Technology Ltd., Siemens and Nordex Energy Ireland.

Sligo Institute of Technology

The **National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT)** is a global centre of excellence for training and research in bioprocessing and bioanalytics. NIBRT is based on an innovative collaboration between University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin City University and the IT Sligo and is primarily funded by the Government through IDA Ireland. NIBRT provides a range of online distance learning programmes in Biopharmaceutical Processing and Bioanalytics in partnership with the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Industrial collaborations have included Merck Sharp Dohme, Pfizer and Eli Lilly.

The **Precision Engineering, Manufacturing and Materials Centre (PEM)** located in IT Sligo is a multidisciplinary research group focused on addressing specific manufacturing industry research needs in Product Design and Rapid Prototyping, Manufacturing Process Stimulation and Optimisation, Enhancement, Optimisation & Control of Polymer Processes, Precision Engineering and Micro-Machining, Laser-based prototyping and Manufacturing technologies and Nano-Materials

and Nano-Technologies. The identified research and technology themes complement and leverage a number of SFI and Enterprise Ireland funded research centres that the Centre has formed collaborations with.

Each of the PEM Centre research and technology themes are served and supported well by existing Principal Investigator expertise. The Centre has targeted a number of Industry sectors to collaborate with, such as the Polymer Processing, Precision Engineering, Medical Devices, Manufacturing sectors.

The **Centre for Research in the Social Professions (CRiSP)** is the leading multidisciplinary research centre in North-West Ireland, researching social policies and practices impacting on people's daily lives in partnership with social professionals and local communities. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for people living within the region. Social science research at IT Sligo has achieved national and international recognition.

CRiSP consolidates these achievements by creating a research space for social and health science researchers to collaborate together. The members of CRiSP work collaboratively with a number of academic institutions and bodies such as Dublin Institute of Technology, Tralee Institute of Technology, University of Valencia Spain and University of Verona. Industrial Collaborations have included Early Childhood Ireland, North Connaught Youth Services and ASV Horsens Denmark.

The **Centre for Environmental Research Innovation and Sustainability (CERIS)** is an innovative and expert team of researchers, academic staff and students providing key solutions in Applied Ecology and Resource Management in IT Sligo. CERIS focuses on solutions for the management of land, water, natural resources and for the development of alternative energy technologies. Research is carried out on behalf of and in co-operation with a multiplicity of third-level institutions, agencies and industries. IT Sligo has been carrying out environmental research since the 1980's both on a national and international level. Their members provide advice and expertise to a range of academic and industrial bodies in both Europe and North America. Collaborations have included LYIT, UCC, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (US), EPA, Bord na Mona and Waterways Ireland.

CREST, the Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies, is a €3.5m EU funded cross-border project who are helping small green energy businesses to commercialise initial concepts into profitable products. By providing targeted support and facilities businesss develop or adopt new renewable energy and sustainable technologies Through CREST, IT Sligo has linked up with South West College in Northern Ireland, Cavan Innovation and Technology Centre and Dumfries and Galloway College, on the west coast of Scotland, to provide the service.

The **Mitochondrial Biology and Radiation Research Centre (MBRR)** engages in academic and industry focused research and is the leading research centre in IT Sligo's Life Sciences Department. The Centre is technically competent in the areas of Cell Toxicology, Novel Drug Bio-Analysis, Human Biopsy Studies, Novel Diagnostics, Cancer Therapy, Real Time Cell Analysis, Radiation Biology, Mitochondrial Biology, Radiowave Radiation, Sunlight Radiation, Molecular Biology and Cell Biology. The centre has forged collaborative partnerships locally, nationally and internationally spanning

industry, academia and the medical community. These include Newcastle University (UK), McMaster University (Canada), Beaumont Hospital Dublin and ORRCEO Ltd.

The **KITE Project** was delivered by IT Sligo in partnership with Northern Regional College (Northern Ireland) and Ayr College (Scotland). The main aim of the IT Sligo element of the KITE project is to enhance its online programmes by providing “live”, interactive, instructor led training on specialist software and hardware over the internet. In addition distance learning students can remotely access and control this equipment in their own time, reinforcing their knowledge and understanding, resulting in an enhanced learning experience. Industrial collaborations have include companies on a national and international level.

The **Innovation Centre at IT Sligo** which acts as a gateway for businesses and industry to access resources within the Institute. One of IT Sligo’s strategic priorities is to support regional development through Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship. Through the Innovation Centre links between research, teaching and enterprise are strengthened to deliver greater economic contribution and commercialisation opportunities.

The centre itself is primarily to facilitate business through the start-up stage or the expansion of an exiting business into the region. The Innovation Centre is one of the key enablers in maintaining and developing the region’s ability to continue to attract FDI. Occupant businesses are provided with office/desk space in a high quality facility with access to additional services e.g. reception, meeting and conference room facilities, access to high speed broadband, access to institute resources and academics.

The centre can also facilitate businesses who require lab/workshop space e.g. medical device, light engineering, research and development. In addition the centre can also facilitate and has successfully worked with foreign companies or startups looking for a presence in the Irish/European market. In some cases this has been on a short term/temporary basis giving the business the opportunity to look at the feasibility of the Irish/European markets and meet potential partners and customers. The Innovation Centre has a wealth of experience, knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm to ensure that businesses are successful and generate jobs and long term sustainability.

To ensure success the Innovation Centre deliver in partnership with other private and public organisations initiatives to help grow businesses who can be both sustainable and internationally trading. An example of one such initiative is the New Frontiers Programme. New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland’s national entrepreneur development programme that is delivered at in the NW by the Innovation Centre at IT Sligo in collaboration with the Co-lab in Letterkenny IT. It is designed to help people who have an innovative business idea, to establish and run their own companies. It provides a package of supports to help accelerate business development and to equip start-ups with the skills and contacts needed to be successful future business leaders. The New Frontiers programme is open to applications from diverse sectors including: food & consumer products, information & communications technology, engineering & electronics, medical devices, biotechnology, pharma, digital media and internationally traded services. Having worked with 100+ participants from 2004, 85 businesses are operating employing 300+ people with 30 companies exporting.

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Smooth Muscle Research Centre (SMRC): This academic research centre represents the largest group of researchers investigating the control of smooth muscle function in Ireland and the UK. Its research focuses on the cellular mechanisms underlying physiological function and how this is modified in a range of prevalent disease states including urinary incontinence, erectile dysfunction, lymphoedema, arthritis and ureteric obstruction.

The commercial arm of SMRC is the **Ion Channel Biotechnology Centre (ICBC)** was established in 2009 through seed funding from Enterprise Ireland's Applied Research Enhancement Programme. The ICBC is an applied research unit within the Smooth Muscle Research Centre whose aims are to strengthen academic and industrial partnerships across Ireland and provide a nucleus of world class Applied Biomedical Research in the region that will help provide a framework to enable Biopharma.

Social Networks, Environments and Technologies for Wellness and Ageing-in-place (NETWELL): This centre is classified as both academic and mission "sector" focused in nature. The centre promotes Social Networks, Environments and Technologies for Wellness and ageing-in-place. Its goal is to provide a regional Centre of Excellence for the applied research, development and application of innovative service models and technologies to support older-people to age-in-place in their own homes. The research pillars of the Netwell Centre are divided into three categories: Environmental gerontology, Geron-technology and Psychosocial gerontology.

Centre for Affective Software for Ambient Living Awareness (CASALA), funded through seed funding from Enterprise Ireland's Applied Research Enhancement Programme, was a joint venture between the Netwell Centre and the Software Technology Research Centre aimed at working with Irish industry to achieve product innovation, business competitiveness, and market leadership in the emerging ambient assisted living (AAL) sector.

Regulated Software Research Centre (RSRC): The core mission is to engage in regulatory focused software engineering research and to gain an International Profile for Medical Device Software Process Research. The research conducted within the centre will be focused within the following areas: Software Process Improvement; Development of an International Model (Standard) for Medical Device Software Process Assessment; Development of Process Assessments Models for International Medical IT Standards; Security and Privacy for Medical Devices and Networks; Improving the efficiency of software development through incorporating agile and lean practices; Global software development; Development of software development environments for safety-critical embedded software development; Development of Medical Device Products; Development of Roadmaps and Processes for Regulatory Compliance; Medical device software engineering; Risk Management and Regulation associated with End User Computing; Assisted Living Technologies.

Centre for Freshwater and Environmental Studies (CFES): The CFES engages in inter- and multi-disciplinary research that investigates environmental issues and evaluates effective solutions. Expertise in the centre includes lake and river monitoring, palaeolimnology, soil science and agriculture, organic resources management, wetland ecology, microbial ecology, molecular biology,

and environmental modelling. In addition to contributing to cutting edge research, the work undertaken within the CFES also provides relevant scientific information for government agencies, policymakers, communities and other interested parties.

Centre for Renewable Energy (CREDIT): The main strategic strengths of research in the Centre for Renewable Energy lie in Wind energy, energy storage and bioenergy. Research activities are also being pursued in the areas of energy and emissions modelling, sustainable transport, wave and solar energy.

Electrochemistry Research Group (ERG): This group was established in 2009 and it carries out research of both a fundamental and applied nature within the fields of environmental sensor development, photovoltaic devices, molecular electronics and thin film fabrication

Centre for Music Research Centre *IONAD TAIGHDE CEOIL*: This centre engages in research and scholarship across a wide range of music disciplines including musicology, composition, ethnomusicology, Irish traditional music, music technology, music education and community and performance practice. The Centre is committed to developing a strong research ethos underpinning and enhancing all levels of teaching and also to promoting the reputation of the Institute at national and international levels in the discipline area of music. It has also attracted a diverse range of international students, researchers and visiting faculty. The centre fulfils the Institute's regional remit with its eminent focus on research based community engagement.

Creative Media Research Group (CMRG): Creative Media research at DkIT is characterized by a mix of pure and applied research. Applied research is made possible by a strong base of practical skills (in, for example, film production, drawing, graphic design, tangible interface design, media production, multimedia authoring, narrative writing or game design). To-date, the group has created short films, fine-art productions, alternate-reality games, mobile technologies, tangible interfaces and multimedia applications. These artefacts are used to solve practical problems, and to test concepts and design principles. The current research programme of this group focuses on Creative Media Content Creation; Creative Pedagogies & Transformative Work Practices; Creative Technologies; Future Communications; Media – Culture, Community and Society; Media Production and New-Media Narrative Forms.



An Roinn Post, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta
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